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ABSTRACT

This book introduces students to the concept of culture, cultural perspective,and cross-cultural relations. The personal experiences of Peace Corps Volunteers are included in the introduction to each section of the guide and can be used in a variety of ways. Arranged by topic, the guide includes teacher background information, activity outlines, and student worksheets. The activities for each topic are further divided according to suggested groupings of grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12. Each activity outline has at least six parts, including an estimate of class time needed, materials, a statement of objectives, step-by-step procedures, debriefing exercises, and suggestions for extending the activity. The book is divided into three parts: (1) "Defining Culture"; (2) "Developing Global Perspectives"; and (3) "Challenging Assumptions." (EH)

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ED 419 771

PEACE CORPS WORLD WISE SCHOOLS

AN ESSENTIAL RESOURCE FOR GLOBAL LEARNING

LOOKING AT OURSELVES AND OTHERS

SO 029 313

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PEACE CORPS
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LOOKING AT OURSELVES AND OTHERS

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WWS 30T - 98

THE PEACE CORPS

The Peace Corps was established when President John F. Kennedy issued an Executive Order on March 1, 1961. Since that time, thousands of Volunteers have dedicated two years of their lives in another culture to increase international understanding and to transfer valuable skills to the people of the country they are serving.

The Peace Corps, seeking to promote world peace and friendship, has three goals:

1. To help the peoples of interested countries and areas in meeting their needs for trained men and women;
2. To help promote a better understanding of the American people on the part of the peoples served;
3. To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of the American people.

Since the first group arrived in Ghana in 1961, Peace Corps Volunteers have served in more than 130 countries. Although programs vary from country to country based on the host nation's needs and requests, Volunteers traditionally offer skills in the areas of education, agriculture, small business development, community development, the environment, and health. Before placement at their sites, Volunteers receive intensive training in the language and culture of their host countries, as well as in specific technical skills. Cross-cultural training, which includes the study of the history, customs, and values of the host country, prepares Volunteers to become part of a local community for the duration of their two years of service.

By living and working within their local communities, Peace Corps Volunteers not only learn about the people of their host countries but also offer citizens around the world a chance to learn about Americans.

Goals of World Wise Schools

The World Wise Schools Program contributes to the Third Goal of the Peace Corps: to help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of the American people. World Wise Schools promotes this goal by creating opportunities for third through twelfth grade students to learn from the experience of currently serving and Returned Volunteers. The program promotes geographical and cross-cultural awareness while developing the spirit of volunteerism. Today, thousands of students from all 50 states participate in a correspondence program that matches currently serving Peace Corps Volunteers to classes in the United States. Students also benefit from Peace Corps Volunteer experiences as teachers use the World Wise Schools videos, study guides, Web site, speakers bureau, and other educational resources that reflect Volunteer experiences to bring the countries and cultures of the world into U.S. classrooms.

When Peace Corps Volunteers return from overseas, they bring intimate knowledge of other peoples and cultures. They understand that the ability of the United States to function in the world community depends on its understanding of other cultures. They know that global interdependence is a reality, not just a catchword. When Volunteers share their experiences with World Wise classes, the Volunteers help others to fashion a world view based on firsthand knowledge and grass-roots experience. As Bill Moyers, a prominent journalist and former deputy director of the Peace Corps, pointed out in a 1988 speech, "We have guides—[thousands of] Volunteers who have advanced the trip."[1]

To become a part of the World Wise Schools global learning community, please complete the enrollment form found at the back of this book. If you would like more information about the program, you may visit our Web site at http://www.peacecorps.gov or call us for more information at (800) 424-8580, extension 2283.

Goals of *Looking at Ourselves and Others*

During Peace Corps service, Volunteers look closely at the assumptions and values that shape their perspectives as Americans. They learn about themselves as individuals and as representatives of a multifaceted American culture. Similarly, the activities contained in *Looking at Ourselves and Others* will challenge World Wise students to become more conscious of the values they share with their families, friends, and communities. The materials also provide students with analytical tools that help combat stereotypical thinking and enhance cross-cultural communication.

As your students learn about other countries and cultures, they—like Peace Corps Volunteers—will begin to recognize that individuals and groups hold diverse views of the world. They will realize this diversity often stems from the unique systems of values, beliefs, experiences, and knowledge that link people within cultural groups. In "Neighbors"[3] (see below), Returned Volunteer Orin Hargraves illustrates the profound effect of looking at others from a new perspective. The activities in this guide are designed to help students develop the habit of viewing people and places from multiple points of view.

Looking at Ourselves and Others, a revision of an earlier World Wise Schools publication of the same title, introduces students to the concepts of perspective, culture, and cross-cultural relations. Specifically, the readings and activities in this guide are designed to help students:

1. Recognize and appreciate differences in perception among individuals and cultures;

2. Define culture and recognize its role in developing perceptions of ourselves and others;

3. Challenge assumptions, promote cross-cultural awareness, and provide opportunities to practice the behaviors that make cross-cultural communication possible.

Learning from the experience of Peace Corps Volunteers

The personal experiences of Peace Corps Volunteers are included in the introduction to each section of this guide to help teachers prepare for the lessons that follow. But these also have value as educational resources for students. They could be used to supplement reading materials, to illustrate the use of various writing techniques, to spark interest in volunteerism, and to learn more about other cultures and the Peace Corps.

Neighbors

It was a hot, dusty afternoon in late August. I had just returned to El Hajeb, the village where I had taught English for a year. I'd been away for the summer: a few weeks of being surrounded by Volunteers old and new at that year's omnibus training program in Rabat, the capital. El Hajeb was a big comedown after all that. I was the only American in town, and though I'd been quite happy with that for a year, coming back to it all at once was a shock. I hadn't yet rediscovered any of the parts about it that I liked.

I spent most of the afternoon writing letters, catching up on correspondence that had piled up in my mailbox while I was away. I was also conveniently avoiding the heat and, to some degree, the village itself. At the moment it didn't feel like the place I wanted to be. I stayed inside the thick, cool, stuccoed walls of my fine house. You see, mine wasn't the mud-hut Peace Corps experience. I lived in the upstairs apartment of a beautiful colonial-period villa in the part of the town that had been built by the French. Walnut trees lined the avenue outside, and I could hear boys throwing stones up into them, trying to knock down the ripening fruit.

A cool breeze from the mountains picked up late in the afternoon, intimating that it might bring some clouds our way, along with a shower or thunderstorm. I took advantage of the cooler air to get a little exercise and walked to the post office. I felt fortified now after the hours of cool seclusion, ready to withstand the stares of the children, and the cries of "Christian! Christian!" that often accompanied me on my walks in the village.

The post office offered the usual experience: a cluster of people mashed together in front of the sullen clerk, all thrusting their business in his face, with a line of the less determined off to one side, standing patiently in the belief that they would be waited on sometime. I joined the line, not yet feeling up to the cluster experience. It took 10 minutes or so, but this way I could stay inside the thick American shell that I still wasn't willing to come out of. When I started back, the rain was looking like a sure thing. The breeze

How to use *Looking at Ourselves and Others*

Arranged by topic, the guide includes teacher background information, activity outlines, and student worksheets. Many activities are similar to those used to help prepare Peace Corps Volunteers for their cross-cultural experiences.

The activities for each topic are further divided according to three suggested groupings: grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12. **Teachers are encouraged to review all the activities and to select or adapt the materials that are most appropriate for their students.** Each activity outline has at least six parts: an estimate of class time needed, materials, a statement of objectives, step-by-step procedures, debriefing exercises, and suggestions for extending the activity.

Promoting Community

Many of these activities ask students to examine personal points of view and share opinions on a range of social issues with their peers. Therefore, it is essential that each activity is introduced within a classroom that tolerates diverse opinions, enhances self-esteem, and supports cooperation. In other words, the work and the spirit of the class is about building community as well as building knowledge.

The Peace Corps model of service acknowledges that building communities in which diverse points of view contribute to achieving common goals takes time and trust. What can schools do to begin this process? Alfie Kohn, educator and author, suggests that school communities can be forged by ". . . providing for numerous classwide and schoolwide activities in which students work together toward a common end; and weaving the goal of community through academic instruction."[2]

had become a wind. Little dust devils were whirling around in the dirt streets, and withered leaves twirled down from the sycamore trees that formed an arcade over the wide, dilapidated street. Dark clouds were bearing down from the mountains to the south. I picked up my pace, thinking that now I'd have to hurry to get in before the rain.

Down the street, coming towards me, was a woman wrapped up in a turquoise jellaba. *I recognized her as my downstairs neighbor. She wasn't veiled and her hood was off: This was only a walk in the neighborhood and she wouldn't be subject to the prying eyes of students. As we continued toward each other, we were nearly jogging, trying to reach our destinations before the rain. Under these circumstances, the normal greeting rituals—which could run to a few minutes of chattering even with someone that you saw all the time—would be overlooked. We only exchanged the minimum smiles and hello, how-are-yous as we passed.*

"Please tell Aisha to put the goats in the shed. It's going to rain," she shouted at me over her shoulder as she continued on her way.

"OK," I said.

In that moment, such a feeling of elation! And why, over something so small and trivial? Because she said it in Arabic, not in French. Because she didn't slow down or dress it up for speaking to a foreigner. Because she said it to me in the same way she would have said it to one of her own children, or one of her other neighbors: without formality, without any awareness that she was talking to someone from the other side of the world, but just saying it the way she would normally say it. Because after all I was only her neighbor, no one strange or special. I was just the guy who lived upstairs.

- Orin Hargraves served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Morocco from 1980 to 1982.

Below are some questions that Kohn proposes teachers may want to consider as they work with their students to explore new ways of thinking about themselves and the world.

1. Are students aware that the adults in their school respect and care about them as individuals? What would a visitor to the school see and hear that exhibits genuine respect and caring for each student? Are student views and opinions considered as a matter of course?

2. Do the students know each other well enough to truly care about one another? Are they aware of the diverse perspectives represented in the class? Are students taught alternatives to name-calling and put-downs? How can class activities be reconstructed to allow students to develop collegial relationships with each of their classmates?

3. Are there opportunities for the entire class or school to work together? Do the students truly have a say in how such projects will be carried out? Are all students invested in the projects' success?

4. Are community-building activities used to support academic learning? Do students have opportunities to learn from each other? Does the academic curriculum point to cooperation and community as concepts that have meaning across disciplines?

Promoting community is a challenging task. But if students are to develop global relationships, they must also nurture local relationships. One way to teach them how is to model behavior that supports differences and builds communities.

The Importance of Debriefing

Coming to closure is as important as providing a strong beginning. Students need the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of an activity, and teachers need to make sure that students have not misinterpreted new knowledge. Sivasailam Thiagarajan, a designer of cross-cultural simulation games, structures the debriefings that follow his intense games around six phases. His suggestions for games are applicable to any class activity. Many of the debriefing questions that appear in this guide are modeled on these phases.[4]

Phase 1. How do you feel? The purpose of this phase is to give students an opportunity to let off steam and be more objective as the debriefing continues.

Phase 2. What happened? The purpose of this phase is to collect data about what happened during the activity. Students are encouraged to compare and contrast their recollections and to recognize patterns of individual and group behavior.

Phase 3. What did you learn? The purpose of this phase is to encourage students to construct some general principles or hypotheses based on their experiences.

Phase 4. How does this relate to the real world? The purpose of this phase is to encourage a discussion of how the principles identified in Phase 3 can be applied to real life situations.

Phase 5. What if? The purpose of this phase is to encourage students to speculate what would happen if the activity were conducted in a different context or with another set of instructions.

Phase 6. What next? The purpose of this phase is to facilitate action. Students are encouraged to use their insights to come up with specific ways to use new information or behaviors.

These six debriefing topics can be addressed in a number of ways. The teacher can lead class discussions, or students can lead large or small groups in exploring the topics. Students can respond to individual questions on index cards and share selected responses during a large-group discussion. Panel discussions or role-playing can help students identify real-world applications of what they learn. If class time runs short, students can respond to a questionnaire as homework or the teacher can schedule an in-class debriefing for the next class meeting.

Extending the Ideas

The activities in this book lend themselves to further development. Each suggested activity is followed by ideas for extending the concepts presented in the lesson through additional research or expanded projects. For example, service-learning projects can help students become actively involved in cross-cultural activities in their schools and communities. A "Service-Learning Rubric"[5] is reprinted here to help you reflect on what constitutes a quality service-learning project.

The activities contained in *Looking at Ourselves and Others* are designed to challenge assumptions, promote cross-cultural awareness, and provide opportunities to practice the behaviors that make cross-cultural communication possible. Presented in a supportive context with opportunities for reflection and application, these and other World Wise Schools materials can help students join Peace Corps' exciting and essential mission—right in their own classrooms. We invite you to be creative in designing lessons built around them, and to share your lessons with us at:

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Service-Learning Rubric

Service-learning is integrating the regular classroom curriculum with a problem or issue to meet a community or school-based need. It is the method by which young people learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service projects. Dr. Mary J. Selke, UNI, devised the following rubric framework for determining what projects accomplish.

	Strong Impact	Good Impact	Some Impact	Minimal Impact
1. Meet actual community needs	Determined by current research conducted or discovered by students with teacher assistance where appropriate	Determined by past research discovered by students with teacher assistance where appropriate	Determined by making a guess at what community needs may be	Community needs secondary to what a project teacher wants to do; project considers only student needs
2. Are coordinated in collaboration with community	Active, direct collaboration with community by the teacher and/or student	Community members act as consultants in the project development	Community members are informed of the project directly	Community members are coincidentally informed or not knowledgeable at all
3. Are integrated into academic curriculum	Service-learning as instructional strategy with content/service components integrated	Service-learning as a teaching technique with content/service components concurrent	Service-learning part of curriculum but sketchy connections, with emphasis on service	Service-learning supplemental to curriculum, in essence just a service project or good deed
4. Facilitate active student reflection	Students think, share, produce reflective products individually and as group members	Students think, share, produce group reflection only	Students share with no individual reflective projects	Ran out of time for true reflection; just provided a summary of events
5. Use new academic skill/ knowledge in real world settings	All students have direct application of new skill or knowledge in community service	All students have some active application of new skill or knowledge	Some students more involved than others or little community service involvement	Skill knowledge used mostly in the classroom; no active community service experience
6. Help develop sense of caring for and about others	Reflections show affective growth regarding self in community and the importance of service	Reflections show generic growth regarding the importance of community service	Reflections restricted to pros and cons of particular service project regarding the community	Reflections limited to self-centered pros and cons of the service project
7. Improve quality of life for person(s) served	Facilitate change or insight; help alleviate a suffering; solve a problem; meet a need or address an issue	Changes enhance an already good community situation	Changes mainly decorative, but new and unique benefits realized in community	Changes mainly decorative, of limited community benefit, or are not new and unique

Endnotes

[1] "At Home in the World," *To Touch the World: The Peace Corps Experience* (Washington, D.C.: Peace Corps, 1995), p. 156.

[2] *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community* (Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1996).

[3] From *At Home in the World: The Peace Corps Story* (Washington, D.C.: Peace Corps, 1996), pp. 15-17.

[4] Adapted with permission from *Diversity Simulation Games* (Amherst, Massachusetts: HRD Press, 1995), pp. 6 - 7.

[5] From *Service-Learning Curriculum* (Iowa Service-Learning Partnership, 1996).

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PART I:

DEFINING CULTURE

The nsima *looks like mashed potatoes and you take a piece of it and roll it in your hand, indent it with your thumb, and scoop the meat or soup. I am still learning and usually have more food on my face and arms than in my stomach. Today I helped kill a chicken for the first time. It is supposed to be an honor, so I tried, but it made me feel sad. Then we plucked the feathers and are going to cook it. Very different from America's way of eating chicken!*

- Emily Harker[6]

We're all on the same planet together, breathing the same air. We're all living in the same community.

- Dan Barutta[7]

These two statements, one from a Peace Corps Volunteer during her first year of service and the other from a Returned Volunteer 14 years after his experience, speak volumes about the challenges and benefits of global education. Peace Corps Volunteers and other cross-cultural sojourners often begin their journeys thinking about differences, then return home understanding our similarities. Along the way they learn about culture—the daily living patterns and the most deeply held beliefs that a group of people have in common.

According to Ina Corinne Brown in *Understanding Other Cultures:*

> *. . . no custom, belief or behavior can be understood out of its social or cultural context. That is, any item of behavior, any tradition or pattern, can be evaluated correctly only in the light of its meaning to the people who practice it, its relation to other elements of the culture, and the part it plays in the adaptation of the people to their environment or to one another. No custom is "odd" to the people who practice it.* [8]

Even younger students can appreciate the "normalcy" of cultural practices different from their own when they examine these within a framework that links the many factors (e.g., geography, history, belief systems) influencing cultural norms rather than study the practices as isolated oddities.

Cultures are systems of behaviors and customs passed from one generation to the next. The rules, language, religion, family systems, recreation, and education that a group of people share provide predictability and safety in their daily lives. When people are bound together by common beliefs and practices, they understand each other and the world around them has meaning.

As Brown suggests, a culture is a complex and evolving pattern of life, rooted in tradition as well as place. Culture is indelibly a part of each person's identity, but individuals also influence culture. It defines how we see ourselves and how we perceive others. How can we, then, ever understand a culture other than our own? One way is to view differences through a neutral framework that organizes cultural traits around a set of common functions. Over the years anthropologists have developed lists of cultural universals, or functions, that are found in some form in every culture on earth. For example, all cultures have customs and habits related to food. Peace Corps Volunteer Emily Harker's host may slaughter her own chicken while a U.S. family buys a precooked bird from a local fast-food restaurant, but each action has the same function—to acquire food.

The first activity in this section is designed to help students understand the concept of culture. The second familiarizes students with a list of cultural features that can be used as a guide for exploring differences and similarities among groups. These activities have not been assigned specific grade levels because they offer important background for cultural studies at all levels. We recommend that people using this guide adapt these activities to meet the abilities of their students and incorporate them early in their teaching about culture.

The other lessons in this section will provide students with opportunities to reflect on the cultural patterns that shape their perceptions. Activities are included to help students develop awareness of the many groups to which they belong and to build appreciation for the diverse cultures that share the planet.

Everyone Has a Culture—Everyone is Different

Class time needed: 40 minutes

Materials

An "Everyone Has a Culture—Everyone is Different" worksheet for each student

Objectives

- Students will be able to define culture.
- Students will recognize that some differences among people stem from culture and that some stem from personal traits and preferences.

Introduction

This activity invites students to identify aspects of culture that influence our own behavior and sometimes make it difficult to understand the behavior of other people. Culture is a complex idea, and teachers should be prepared to offer students many examples of cultural features.

Procedure

1. Write the following statements on the board.
    - No one is exactly like me.
    - I have many things in common with the members of my family and community.
    - Every person in the world needs some of the same things I need.

2. Ask students to share ideas that support these statements.

3. Point out that people in various groups often look at people in other groups as "different."

4. Ask students to describe some of these differences. Why may people in one group behave differently from people in another?

5. Explain that many differences are related to culture—ways of living and beliefs that are handed down from one generation to the next. Working from the list on the board, explain that all people share basic needs (food, shelter, etc.), that each of us learns a set of behaviors and beliefs from the people we grow up with (the kinds of houses we build and foods we eat), and that each individual has unique talents and preferences (I'm good at math; I don't like chocolate). When we talk about the behaviors and beliefs that a group of people have in common, we are talking about culture.

6. Ask students to complete the worksheet in order to help them identify aspects of their own cultures. Explain that each student should answer each question with one sentence or phrase. Then students should rank each item as to how important they feel it is to their culture.

7. After students have completed the worksheets, ask them to share their answers in small groups. Ask the groups to compare and contrast various aspects of their individual cultures.

8. In some schools, students may share many cultural traits. Some students may not identify with a particular ethnic or foreign culture. Ask students if they think there is one American culture. Discuss characteristics of your region (immigration patterns, geographic location, etc.) that might explain the similarities and differences among student responses to the worksheet.

Debriefing

Use the following questions to focus discussion on the role culture plays in forming our behaviors and beliefs.

1. How does it feel to know you are part of a cultural group that shares many ideas and beliefs?

2. What happened when you compared your worksheets? How many different cultures are represented in the class?

3. What did you learn from this activity?
    - Does culture explain why other people sometimes seem "different"?
    - What are some things that you do that you learned from your culture?
    - Are all of our behaviors related to culture? (Possible answer: Some behaviors are related to individual preferences and personality traits.)

4. What can you do to learn about and understand other cultures?

5. What if you were part of another culture? How might you be different from the way you are now?

6. How can we use what we learned in this lesson to improve our community?

Extending the Ideas

- Have students explore their community's history to trace the influence of various cultures. Who were the original inhabitants of the area? Over the years, what other cultural groups have come to the area? What are some of the features of your community that represent these groups (e.g., architecture, place names, types of restaurants, religious organizations)?

- Ask students to imagine a community that allowed no resident to display or practice any element of cultural identity. Have students write short stories describing a typical day in such a community. When students have completed their stories, ask volunteers to read their compositions. Are the fictitious communities desirable or interesting places to be? Would it be possible or desirable to create such a community in reality?

Everyone Has a Culture—Everyone Is Different

Directions: Write one sentence or phrase about each topic. Then rate each item from 1-10 (1 is most important) according to what value this topic has in your culture.

Rank

_____ What language(s) do you speak?

_____ What is your religion?

_____ What music do you listen to?

_____ What dances do you know?

_____ What foods do you eat at home?

_____ What do you wear on special occasions?

_____ What holidays and ceremonies are important?

_____ What is most important to you?

_____ What things do you believe are right and wrong?

_____ How important is your extended family?

The name of my culture is ______________________________.

The Iceberg[10]

Class time needed: 30 minutes

Materials

"Features of Culture" handout for each student

Objectives

- Students will identify features that all cultures have in common.
- Students will understand that culture includes visible and invisible features.

Introduction

Culture has been compared to an iceberg. Just as an iceberg has a visible section (one-ninth of it) above the waterline and a larger, invisible section below the waterline, culture has some aspects that you can observe and others that you can only imagine or intuit. Like an iceberg, that part of culture that is visible (observable behavior) is only a small part of a much bigger whole.

Procedure

1. Draw a large iceberg floating in the sea on the board. Ask students: What do you know about icebergs? Emphasize the fact that most of the iceberg is hidden from view.

2. Ask students to look over the "Features of Culture" handout. Explain that this list presents some of the features all cultures have in common. Pictures of people involved in everyday activities in various parts of the world will help you illustrate this idea.

3. Ask students to identify those features from the list that they can see in the behavior of people and those that are invisible. As students share their ideas, record them above or below the waterline on your iceberg drawing.

4. Point out that there is a relationship between those items that appear above the waterline and those that appear below it. In most cases, the invisible aspects of culture influence or cause the visible one. Religious beliefs, for example, are "seen" in certain holiday customs, and notions of modesty influence styles of dress. Ask students to find other examples of this from the iceberg representation of culture.

Debriefing

Use the following questions to help students understand how the "Features of Culture" can be used to enhance their understanding of other cultures.

1. Does it make sense to compare culture to an iceberg? Can you think of other things to which the visible and invisible features of culture can be compared?

2. A Peace Corps Volunteer serving as a teacher in Mongolia had this to say about some photographs she sent to a group of students in the United States.

> *Mongolians are very serious and composed in their expressions. In the city, this is beginning to change slightly. You'll see a number of my students smiling. But this is not traditional. When I first came here, my friends asked me why Americans smile so much. They felt that Americans smile even at people they don't like and that this was quite insincere.*
>
> - Lisa Buchwalder[11]

What does this tell you about the visible and invisible features of culture? Does it explain why people from different cultures sometimes misunderstand each other?

3. Can you match this description of American and Mongolian behaviors to any of the items on your list of cultural features?

4. How can a list such as "Features of Culture" help you understand differences among people? (Possible answer: Differences may seem less strange or unusual when we understand them as variations on fundamental characteristics that all cultures have in common.)

Extending the Ideas

- If your class is corresponding with a Peace Corps Volunteer through World Wise Schools, share the "Features of Culture" list with your volunteer and ask him or her describe some of the visible and invisible features of the host country.
- Revisit the first activity in this section. Ask students to match items from the "Everyone Has a Culture—Everyone is Different" worksheet to items on the "Features of Culture" list.

Features of Culture

1. facial expressions
2. religious beliefs
3. religious rituals
4. importance of time
5. paintings
6. values
7. literature
8. child-raising beliefs
9. ideas about leadership
10. gestures
11. holiday customs
12. ideas about fairness
13. ideas about friendship
14. ideas about modesty
15. foods
16. eating habits
17. understanding of the natural world
18. concept of self
19. the importance of work
20. concept of beauty
21. music
22. styles of dress
23. general world view
24. concept of personal space
25. rules of social etiquette
26. housing

The Multicultural Person[12]

Class time needed: 20 minutes

Materials

No materials needed

Objectives

- Students will identify themselves as members of many different groups.
- Students will observe differences without making value judgments.

Introduction

Each of us belongs to many groups that function in ways similar to larger cultures. This exercise can be used to teach elementary school children about the many groups to which they belong. It attempts to teach the notion of differences in a neutral framework without evaluating those differences as being either good or bad.

Procedure

1. The teacher should prepare for this activity by developing three lists of neutral characteristics that would be likely to divide the group. The first list should include characteristics related to objects worn or carried by the students, e.g., those wearing black shoes/brown shoes/other-colored shoes; those wearing red/those not wearing red; those with backpacks/those without backpacks. The second list may include more personal characteristics, such as hair color, eye color, birth month, or food and activity preferences. The third set will contain more obvious cultural differences, such as gender, national background, and race. The lists should be appropriate for the students in the class and designed in such a way that students are not singled out in embarrassing ways.

2. Move desks and chairs off to one side of the room to clear a large area in the center of the floor.

3. Assemble the students into a large group in the center of the room. Ask students to name a few characteristics that they all have in common (e.g, all of the students live in the same community and are members of a particular class in school). Help students identify ways that these characteristics set them apart from other groups. For example, all of the students in the school may be expected to follow a particular set of rules. All of the fifth grade students may take part in an annual field trip.

4. Then give a series of instructions that will divide the group according to items on the first list, such as: "All those wearing red move to the right side of the room, and all those not wearing red move to the left side of the room."

5. Reassemble the large group and continue to issue instructions that will divide the group in a series of ways.

6. After the group has become familiar with the exercise, move toward the more personal differences related to the second list.

7. End the exercise by using characteristics from the third list.

Debriefing

Use the following questions to focus discussion around racial/cultural difference being just one of the significant components that define us.

1. How did it feel to learn that each of you is a member of many different groups? Were you surprised by the number of groups to which you belong?

2. How did you feel about being put into a group based on characteristics you couldn't change (e.g., eye color and hair color)?

3. What happened when we started dividing the class into subgroups according to the color of their clothing or shoes? What comments did you or your classmates make?

4. What did you learn by doing this exercise?

5. What do you think about judging individuals according to the color of their shoes or by what kind of food they like?

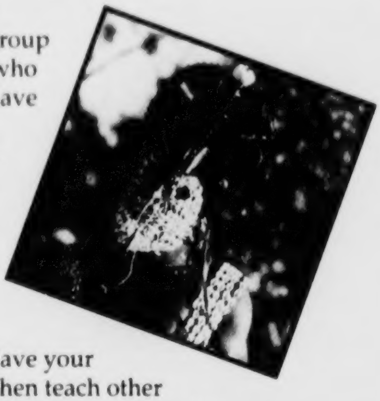
6. How does this exercise relate to how you get along with people? What kind of judgments do you make about people? How are your judgments similar to or different from food or clothing preferences?

7. What if we had done this exercise by giving different treatment to certain groups? How would you feel? How might other people in the group feel?

8. How can we use what we learned during this exercise in real life?

Extending the Ideas

- Point out to students that each of us typically can identify with a number of groups. Provide several examples, such as "people who speak Spanish," or "people who like to eat fish." Have students brainstorm additional examples of groups. Then, ask students to list on a sheet of paper 10 groups to which they belong. Have students arrange the items on their lists in a hierarchy from the group with largest number of people to the smallest (e.g., from people who live on the planet Earth to people who hate French fries). Then have each student collect the signatures of other students in the class who belong to the same groups. Afterward, discuss the similarities and differences among the student lists. Did students in the class belong to many of the same groups? Do some of these groups identify members as part of a particular culture or cultures?



- This lesson could lead to a service-learning project. Discuss the multicultural nature of your class, school, and/or community. Have your students learn more about the cultures present in your area and then teach other students about them. They may make posters, bulletin boards, videos, or multimedia presentations to accomplish this. Use the Service- Learning Rubric found in the introduction to this guide to help you plan and execute a project that will have strong impact.

Cuisine and Etiquette in Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zambia[13]

Class time needed: 40 minutes

Materials

- Three readings on cuisine and etiquette in Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zambia
- Large sheets of paper or overhead transparencies

Objective

- Students will make inferences about cultural norms from customs related to eating in three African countries.

Introduction

Food is one of the most enjoyable ways to experience another culture. The focus of this activity about mealtime etiquette is on how manners reflect cultural norms. The descriptions were written by teachers from Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zambia. ***Note: This lesson could be used to supplement content on African agriculture or climate.***

Procedure

1. Explain the concept of "staple food," usually a carbohydrate that is eaten daily and is a major source of calories. Ask the students to identify the staple foods of other cultures they have studied (potatoes for Ireland, rice for Japan, maize for Mexico, etc.). What is our staple food? Some students may say hamburgers, but wheat, corn, or potatoes are more accurate answers. Explain that in their readings in this lesson they will learn that rice is the staple food for most of West Africa, maize (corn) for much of Eastern and Southern Africa, and *matoke* (ma-tok-a), or cooking bananas, for Uganda.

2. Ask students to describe the table manners they are expected to observe in their homes or in the school cafeteria. Who eats together? What do you do before eating? Are there rules about your hands or the way you sit? What do you do at the end of a meal? Why do we have rules about how to eat? Have you ever been in situations where the rules you are used to don't seem to fit?

3. Introduce the countries of Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zambia. If the students are unfamiliar with their locations, point them out on a map of Africa.

4. Divide the class into three groups for Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zambia.

5. Have each group read its handout (i.e., the Zambia groups reads "Cuisine and Etiquette in Zambia") to identify the mealtime behaviors that are considered acceptable or unacceptable in Sierra Leone, Uganda, or Zambia.

6. On large sheets of paper or overhead transparencies, each group should draw up a list of rules for mealtime that they think are observed in their assigned country. The list should include: a) roles for men, women, and children; b) proper behavior before, during, and after the meal; and c) taboos, or what not to do when eating in this country.

7. Have each group display its lists and report on its findings. As a whole class, compare etiquette among the three countries.

8. Remind students that the cultural behaviors that we can observe often provide ideas about what the group values or thinks is most important. For example, by observing that it is common for Ugandan families to say a prayer before eating, we may assume that religion is an important part of daily life. Work with the whole class to develop some ideas about the values represented by the behaviors they listed. Some examples follow.

- In Sierra Leone, if you visit a friend, he or she will almost always invite you to stay and eat. *(Possible values: sharing, hospitality)*
- In Sierra Leone, when everyone finishes eating, they wash their hands and thank the cook. *(Possible values: cleanliness, respect for adults and for work)*
- In Uganda, the responsibility of preparing the family's meals belongs solely to women and girls in the home. *(Possible value: clearly defined roles for men and women)*
- In Zambia, if visitors happen to have a meal with the family, they are given the honor of washing first. *(Possible value: guests are treated with honor)*

Debriefing

Use the following questions to focus discussion on the meaning of culture.

1. What are some mealtime rules observed in your household that are similar to those observed in the African households described in your reading?

2. What are some mealtime habits or rules in your home that a visitor from one of these three African countries may find unusual? What could you do to make your visitor feel comfortable?

3. Zambian children learn lessons about manners from their mothers during mealtime. How did you learn what behavior is appropriate at mealtime?

4. What if you brought a guest from Sierra Leone to a fast food restaurant in the United States? What might your friend think about the type of food, the manner of serving it, and the way people eat?

5. Why are rules of etiquette so important? Whose rules do you follow when you're sharing a meal at someone's house? Whose rules do you follow in a restaurant?

Extending the Ideas

- Simulate an African meal using the recipes provided below. Responsibilities for preparation should be divided among class members as you see fit. Some classes may prefer to prepare one dish; others may want to sample several. The easiest dish to prepare is fried plantains. Groundnut stew is simple to prepare, and Americans usually enjoy it. During the meal, follow the rules outlined in the readings as closely as possible. Following the meal, debrief the class by asking them to react to eating African style.

- Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Chris Davis who served in Guatemala from 1987 to 1989 remembers his first meal in his host country as an awkward one:

> *I am trying to force down what they give me, none of it recognizable to me. Some kind of fried vegetable and small pieces of meat. The mother smiles broadly at me, turns to [scold] one of her older kids, then smiles at me again. Since I am unaware that I have to be the one to stand first, we sit at the table for over three hours.*

Encourage class members to tell their own stories about feeling awkward in a strange situation or having a hard time understanding someone else's ways of doing things. What did they learn from these experiences?

- Invite a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, an international exchange student, a recent immigrant, or students' family members to talk about food and manners in other countries.

Cuisine and Etiquette in Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, the staple food is rice. "If I haven't had my rice, I haven't eaten today," is a popular saying. Sierra Leoneans eat rice at least twice a day. Only women and girls prepare the food. They usually cook in big pots on a three-stone stove (three big rocks that support the pots). Firewood or charcoal is the main fuel except for some city dwellers who use gas or electricity.

If you visit a Sierra Leonean friend, he or she will almost always invite you to stay and eat. Usually the men and boys eat separately from the women and girls. Everyone washes their hands before they eat, and then they gather around in a circle with a huge dish of food placed in the middle. Sharing is an important part of life in Sierra Leone, and each person eats from the part of the big dish that is right in front of him or her. It is very bad manners to reach across the dish! Only the right hand is used for eating; the left hand is considered unclean.

When you are eating, you usually don't talk. Talking shows a lack of respect for the food. It is rude to lean on your left hand while you are eating. People usually drink water only after a meal is over.

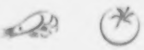
The oldest males get the choicest food, the best pieces of meat or fish. Then the young males take the next best pieces, and then finally the women and girls get any meat or fish that is left. Sometimes the women and girls wait until the men and boys have had all they want before they eat.

Rice is eaten with the hands by squeezing or rolling it into a ball, dipping it into the sauce, and then popping it into the mouth. If rice falls from your fingers or mouth, you don't put it back in the dish. When everyone finishes eating, they wash their hands and thank the cook.

Many ingredients go into sauces or stews to go with rice. The most popular sauces are made of greens, especially cassava or potato leaves. Other common ingredients include palm oil, onions, tomatoes, yams, and red peppers. Sometimes groundnut (peanut) oil or coconut oil are used. Other sources of protein that go into the sauces include groundnuts and beans, as well as fish, chicken, goat meat, or pork. Seafood, such as oysters, lobster, and crab, may also be used. Most of the calories, however, come from rice, which is eaten in large quantities.

Fruits in Sierra Leone include oranges, bananas, papaws (papayas), lemons, avocados, guava, watermelon, mangoes, and pineapples. Fruit is usually eaten as a snack. Plantains are often sliced and fried as chips for a snack. Tea and coffee are drunk in some parts of the country for breakfast. Cokes and beer are popular with many people who can afford them.

Cuisine and Etiquette in Uganda



In Uganda, the staple food is *matoke* (cooking bananas). Other food crops include cassava (manioc), sweet potatoes, white potatoes, yams, beans, peas, groundnuts (peanuts), cabbage, onions, pumpkins, and tomatoes. Some fruits, such as oranges, papaws (papayas), lemons, and pineapples, are also grown.

Most people, except for a few who live in the city centers, produce their own food. The responsibility of preparing the family's meals belongs solely to women and girls in the home. Men and boys of age 12 and above are not even expected to sit in the kitchen, which is separate from the main house. Cooking is done on an open fire using wood for fuel.

Most families eat two meals a day. The two meals are lunch and supper. Breakfast is just a cup of tea or a bowl of porridge.

When a meal is ready, all members of the household wash their hands and sit down on [floor] mats. Hands have to be washed before and after the meal because most Ugandans eat with their hands. At mealtime everybody is welcome; visitors and neighbors who drop in are expected to join the family at a meal.

Food is served by women. They cut it up into small pieces for each member of the family. Sauce, which is usually a stew with vegetables, beans, butter, salt, and curry powder, is served to each person on a plate. Sometimes fish or beef stew is served.

Normally a short prayer is said before the family starts eating. During the meal, children talk only when asked a question. It is bad manners to reach for salt or a spoon. It is better to ask someone sitting close to it to pass it. It is also bad manners to leave the room while others are still eating. Everyone respects the meal by staying seated until the meal is over. Leaning on the left hand or stretching ones legs while at a meal is a sign of disrespect and is not tolerated.

People usually drink water at the end of the meal. It is considered odd to drink water while eating.

When the meal is finished, everyone in turn gives a compliment to the mother by saying, "Thank you for preparing the meal, madam." No dessert is served after the meal. Fruits like papaw, pineapple, or sweet bananas are normally eaten as a snack between meals.

Cuisine and Etiquette in Zambia

Zambia's staple food is maize (corn), and Zambians eat maize in several ways. When the corn is ripe but still green, it can be roasted and boiled. When it is dry and hard, it can be fried or boiled. It can also be pounded slightly to remove the top layer and boiled either by itself or mixed with beans or groundnuts (peanuts). At times the maize is ground to a size a little bigger than rice and is cooked as rice. Finally, we have the fine cornmeal which is called mealie-meal in Zambia. This is used for making *nsima*, the most popular meal. *Nsima* is steamed cornmeal.

Meat from cows, goats, sheep, and fish are used in sauces over *nsima*. There are also a lot of vegetables put in sauces, such as leaves from beans, okra, cow peas, pumpkins, and cassava. Other vegetables eaten almost daily include onions and tomatoes.

All the cooking is done by the wife. *Nsima* is usually prepared for lunch and dinner and not for breakfast. In a traditional setting, boys from the age of seven eat with the man.

The mother eats with the girls and the younger boys. This is because all of the children below the age of seven are under the guidance of their mother. Almost all learning takes place through daily activities in the home. The mother, who is in charge of the kids' learning, has to take care of their learning at meal time. This is changing, especially in towns and cities. The trend now is that members of the family all eat together.

Before eating, everybody washes hands in order of the status of the members of the family: father first, then mother and others follow according to their ages. One of the younger children, boy or girl, passes a water dish around for others to wash their hands. If a visitor happens to have a meal with the family, he is given the honor of washing first.

It is rude to talk very much or loudly while eating. After eating, the family members wash their hands again in the same order. The wife and the young ones clear the table. Belching after a meal used to be a compliment, but not nowadays.

Recipes

Each recipe serves four.

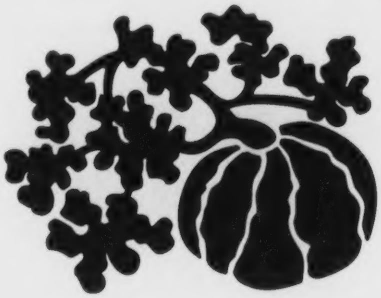
Groundnut Stew

-1 pound peanut butter
-1 pound chicken or meat
-1/4 pound onions
-1/4 pound tomatoes diced
-1 can tomato paste
-salt and pepper
-1 cup milk
-cayenne pepper (optional)

Cut the chicken or meat into 1-inch pieces and season with salt. Brown the meat, then add the onion, tomatoes, tomato paste, milk, and red pepper. Simmer for half an hour. Then add the peanut butter. Simmer until the sauce is very thick. Serve with rice.

Matoke

-10 to 20 *matoke* (green cooking bananas—plantains may be used)
-5 to 7 cups water, depending on the quantity of bananas



Peel the bananas and wash them in cold water. Put into a pot, add the water, and cover. Boil for 10 minutes, then reduce the heat and continue to cook. The mixture will turn yellow when well-cooked. Drain the water. Mash the bananas with a wooden spoon. Wrap the mashed food in foil and place on a steaming basket. Place the steamer inside a large pot and add water. Steam on low heat for 20 minutes. Serve while hot.

Nsima

-1 cup cold water
-3 cups hot water
-2 to 3 cups corn meal

Boil water in a saucepan. Make a paste using some of the meal with the cup of cold water. Add the paste to hot water. Stir with a wooden spoon until thickened like porridge. Cover the saucepan and simmer for some time (about 15 minutes). Lower the heat a little. Remove the lid and gradually add corn meal, stirring constantly and flattening any lumps that may form. Continue to add meal and stir until *nsima* thickens to the desired consistency (some people like it thin, and others prefer it thick). Cover and reduce heat to very low. Leave for a few minutes to allow further cooking. Stir the *nsima* once again and serve in a slightly wet serving dish. Cover to keep it warm. Serve with meat, poultry, fish, or vegetables.

Fried Plantains

-4 plantains (or green bananas)
-2 tablespoons lemon juice
-peanut oil
-black pepper

Cut the bananas into slices and cover with lemon juice. Cook the slices quickly in very hot peanut oil until crisp. The bananas may be sprinkled with pepper.

Activity Suggestions: Grades 6-9

Chatter[14]

Class time needed: 40 minutes

Materials

- Photocopy of the "Chatter" etiquette sheets
- A whistle and a timer to help you pace the game

Objectives

- Students will experience the challenge of using and interpreting unfamiliar communication patterns.
- Students will identify strategies for successful cross-cultural communication.

Introduction

Language is one of the most obvious and one of the most complicated defining features of a culture. And language—vocabulary, syntax, intonation—is but one aspect of the complex communication patterns that groups use to share meaning and experience. Kristyn Leftridge[15] served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Morocco from 1991 to 1992. In the example to the right from the Peace Corps' collection of "Hello Data," she describes the difficulty of a simple greeting.

> *In Moroccan Arabic the standard basic greeting is "Salam oo-alley koom." It translates literally to "Peace be unto you." The appropriate response is "Oo-alley koom salam," meaning "And unto you peace." But knowing the words is not enough. Greetings in Morocco will go on for many minutes—sometimes up to half an hour—as the parties ask about each other's health, faith in Allah, families, work, etc. Moroccans will shake hands when greeting, touching the heart immediately after the handshake to show that the greeting is sincere. Sometimes instead of touching the heart, they will kiss their own hand after the handshake as a sign of particular esteem or affection. In the case of family or close friends, women greeting women and men greeting men will kiss each other's cheeks back and forth a few times. In the north, it's right cheek—left cheek—left cheek. In other parts of the country, it could be right—left—right, or right—left only. How much you kiss cheeks also depends on how much you like the person, or how long it's been since you've seen them. The longer it's been, the more kisses are exchanged. Women and men who are not related* NEVER kiss.[16]

"Chatter" is a simulation game that asks players to pay attention to the subtleties of communication and to discuss how these influence our perceptions of individuals and groups.

Procedure

1. Cut the photocopied etiquette sheets into strips and distribute as wide a variety of individual strips as possible.

2. Move the classroom furniture to the sides of the room so that the players have plenty of room to move around.

3. Help the students organize themselves into groups of four to six members. Select another group of three to four students to act as observers.

4. Shuffle the etiquette sheets, and give one to each student. Ask the students to keep their sheets hidden from each other and to study them carefully.

5. Explain that they will be attending a party with guests from many different cultures. The etiquette sheets define the roles that students will play as they make small talk at the party. The observers will look for behaviors indicating frustration or special efforts participants make to understand the "rules" of communication.

6. Ask the members of each small group to talk with each other using the conversational rules described on their etiquette sheets. Students should not divulge the contents of their sheets. The teacher and the student observers should watch the groups as they converse, looking for behaviors to discuss during the debriefing.

7. Blow a whistle after seven to 10 minutes and ask the students to form themselves into new groups.

8. These groups should start a new conversation, with the students continuing to follow the instructions on their etiquette sheets. Again, the teacher and observers should watch the groups as they converse, looking for changes that might occur between the two sessions.

9. Blow the whistle again after another seven to 10 minutes and ask the students to stop talking.

10. Tell them that there are 12 different etiquette sheets and that it is possible for more than one person in each group to have the same sheet. Ask the students to think back silently about their conversations and to guess what instructions each player had on his or her sheet. After a brief pause, ask the participants to take turns telling their guesses to the rest of the groups. However, no student should confirm or deny anyone's guesses at this time.

11. Tell the participants that some etiquette sheets said, "Be yourself." Ask the students to try to guess if any member of the group was acting as himself or herself.

12. Ask the students to tell one another what their etiquette sheet said. Were the students' guesses accurate?

Debriefing

Use questions such as the following to guide discussion about the challenges of cross-cultural communication. Be sure to ask the student observers to share their observations of group and individual behavior to help give participants a broader view of the activity.

1. How did you feel about this exercise? Were you relieved or disappointed when it came to an end? Why?

2. What happened during the simulation? Did any of you feel embarrassed or frustrated during the conversations? What made you feel that way? Was it the way your etiquette sheet asked you to behave? Or the way someone else was instructed to behave? Why do you think you reacted the way you did?

3. Did you consider any of the behavior patterns in this exercise rude or offensive? If so, was it one of your behaviors or someone else's? Why did this behavior bother you?

4. What were the differences between your conversations in the first group and in the second group? Why do you think these differences occurred? Does this happen in real-life situations?

5. Did you correctly guess the etiquette-sheet behaviors at the conclusion of the activity?

6. Discuss the following statements. Ask students whether they agree or disagree with each statement. Ask them to use examples of their experiences from the game and from real life to support their opinions.
   - There is more to a conversation than just the words and sentences.
   - We tend to judge other people based on what we think is "normal."

- Behaviors that we consider to be bizarre or rude may be acceptable or polite in other cultures.
- Sometimes you may feel negative about another person because his or her conversational style seems strange.
- After time, people get used to unusual behaviors and begin paying more attention to the topic of the conversation.

7. What real-world situations are represented in this game? What do the etiquette sheets represent?

8. Can you think of any conversational behaviors you exhibit that others might find distracting or strange? (Hint: Do teenagers have ways of communicating that adults don't understand?)

9. What might have happened if the conversations had lasted for 45 minutes instead of 10?

10. What would have happened if you had been asked to solve a homework problem with the other members of your group?

11. What advice would you give a friend who is about to participate in this activity for the first time?

12. What if you were to visit a foreign country? Based on your experiences during this activity, what are some things you could do to make communication easier?

Extending the Ideas

- Use World Wide Web resources to help students communicate with people from around the world. Use a search engine to locate information. Have students begin their searches with broad terms like "culture" or "language" and refine the search to meet their specific interests as they browse.

- The World Wise Schools program web site <http://www.peacecorps.gov> offers resources for teaching and learning about various countries and cultures. Use the suggestions found in "Volunteer Views" for use of the "Hello Data."

  - Find other countries where a greeting is accompanied by gestures or has a specific traditional format. Give your ideas about what these greetings indicate about the culture of the people. Prepare an oral presentation for your classmates detailing your findings and including a demonstration of the greetings you have discovered.

  - List the ways in which people greet each other in the United States, adult to adult, adult to child, and teenager to teenager. Be sure to include any regional and/or ethnic variations. Explain any accompanying gestures or mannerisms. Prepare a role-play that shows how you would teach a visiting foreign student how to say hello to different groups of adults and young people in the United States.

- View one or more World Wise School *Destination* video tapes. As students watch the tape, they should note customs, objects, and ideas that are unique to the cultures depicted. After viewing the tape, ask students to react to what they have seen. For example, would students feel comfortable shopping in a crowded outdoor marketplace? What adjustments would American families have to make in order to live in a yurt as many families in Kyrgyzstan do? Then work with the whole class to categorize their notes according to "Features of Culture," found in the introduction to this section. Have students discuss whether these universals help them view cultural differences more objectively.

"Chatter" Etiquette Sheets

It is impolite to shout, so talk softly. Whisper. Even if people cannot hear you, do not raise your voice.

It is impolite to talk to more than one person at the same time. Always talk to a single person standing near you so that you can have a private conversation. Do not address your remarks to the group as a whole.

It is important to get others' attention before you speak, so hold your hand above your head and snap your fingers before you make a statement or ask a question. That's the polite way to get everyone's attention.

It is impolite to crowd people, so maintain your distance. Stand away so that there is at least an arm's length between you and the nearest person. If anyone gets too close to you, back off until you have achieved the required distance.

It is friendly to share your thoughts and feelings without any inhibition, so make several self-disclosure statements. Describe your intimate feelings about different subjects. Ask personal questions of the other members of the group.

It is impolite to stare at people, so avoid eye contact. Look at the floor or the speaker's shoes. Do not look at the speaker's face.

It is polite and reassuring to reach out and touch someone. Touch people on the arm or the shoulder when you speak to them.

It is important to show your enthusiasm, so jump in before other speakers have finished their sentences and add your ideas. Remember, it is rude to hold back your thoughts.

It is impolite to speak impulsively. Whenever somebody asks you a question, silently count to seven before you give an answer.

It is impolite to be aloof from others. Stand close to others until you nearly touch them. If someone backs off, keep moving closer.

Be yourself! Behave as you would normally behave at an informal party.

Where I Come From

Class time needed: 20 minutes for initial steps and then two to three additional classes for research and presentation

Materials
Paper and pencils

Objective
- Students will examine their own family traditions to identify how beliefs, values, and customs vary from culture to culture and how those traditions influence their perception of other groups.

Note: **This activity asks students to share potentially sensitive aspects of their personal lives. Help students find "safe" ways to participate and set clear expectations for mutual respect in the class. Teachers should be sensitive to the needs of all students. Reassure students who live with single parents, grandparents, other relatives, or foster families that their experiences are valid and valuable contributions to this activity.**

Introduction
One aspect of cultural identity is the unique set of traditions held in common by a group of people. We can observe evidence of these traditions in day-to-day activities as well as in the ways groups celebrate special occasions. Introduce or review this concept with students and help them generate concrete examples of traditions commonly associated with special events in the United States (fireworks on Independence Day, feasts on Thanksgiving, valentines on February 14, etc.).

Then introduce the idea that families are unique cultural groups. While a specific family will share many traits common to larger groups (religious beliefs, clothing styles, language, etc.), each family develops its own set of traditions that sets it apart from other families. These traditional activities become so firmly a part of "the way we do things" that we sometimes feel puzzled or out of place when these activities are not present in other families.

Procedure
1. Ask each student to write a list of special events that are observed by his or her family. Events can include annual holiday or religious observances as well as family milestones, such as birthdays and anniversaries. Some families have special traditions for observing annual events, such as the first day of the harvest season, or for celebrating special accomplishments, such as graduating to a new grade level.

2. For each item on the list, students should complete this sentence: On this day my family always ______________ .

3. Ask each student to share one or two sentences with the rest of the class. Be sure students understand that they need not share information that is considered private or sacred. Discourage students from making judgmental comments about others' lists.

4. Finally, ask the class to comment on the variety of events celebrated by the families represented in the room. Do some students celebrate special events in similar ways? What do their lists show about what the students and their families value? Which family traditions are truly unique and which are connected to community, ethnic, or religious traditions observed by larger cultural groups?

5. For homework, ask each student to choose one family tradition to explore more fully through interviews and library research. Students can compile this information into oral or written reports for the class. Work with students to formulate a set of interview questions that will encourage family members or acquaintances to discuss their traditions with students. Possible questions include:

- When did this tradition begin?
- Is this tradition associated with special food, clothing, decorations, music?
- Who participates in this event? Do individuals have specific roles or responsibilities?
- Has this tradition changed over the years? What led to these changes?
- Is this tradition associated with a particular season, climate or location? Would it be the same at another time or place?
- How do other family members feel about this tradition? Why do they think it is important?
- How would you feel if you were unable to participate in this event with your family?

Debriefing

Discuss with students how family or community traditions contribute to each individual's idea of what is "normal" and important. Help students extend this idea into their thinking about and accepting the traditions, values, and beliefs of other families and larger cultural groups.

Extending the Ideas

- If your class is corresponding with a Peace Corps Volunteer, have students explore how families in your Volunteer's host country celebrate special events.

- Volunteer Michelle Fisher[17] commented on the importance of family gardens to the people she knew in Vilnius, Lithuania:

> *Most of the people here live in apartment buildings. Everyone has their own flat, or apartment, and typically they all have three rooms. Everyone has a garden, and they must have a garden because if they don't they're not going to eat in the winter. Most people have a pear tree, a plum tree, and an apple tree, strawberries—all kinds of vegetables and potatoes. Potatoes are the staple of the diet here.* Kibelisks *and* cepilini *are two traditional Lithuanian meals both made from potatoes. When it's time to harvest the apples, the people pick all the apples from the trees and all the apples from the ground and begin to make different things out them. Sometimes they make applesauce, apple cheese, apple cake, and they dry the apples. Just about a month ago every house I'd walk into had big strings of little cut apples strung throughout the house.*
>
> *The gardens are usually 10 to 15 kilometers outside the town, and so in order to get to them the families must take a bus. The buses run once a day during the week, and so they have to spend the night. On the weekends they run two to three times a day. All the gardens are together, and they're all the same size. I'd say they're probably one-eighth to one-half acre.*
>
> *A garden actually plays another role besides being a source of food. It keeps the family together because the children are needed to work there. So every weekend the children are taken there. Most people don't have cars, so they take the bus and stay over the weekend. Children stay with their parents and work. When they go to the garden, they usually go mushroom picking in the forests nearby. It's interesting because they usually break off—the sons tend to go with the father and the daughters all go with their mother. And so they have contests of who will get the most mushrooms. And it's a nice time because the parents are able to bond with their children. They work so much here that they don't have time to just sit and talk with their kids. When they're out in the forest, they tell the children what life was like, what life's going to be, what they need to get an education. And they just talk about family things. You know, they're able to bond.*

- Ask your students if any of their family traditions revolve around working together. Compare their responses to Michelle Fisher's comments about Lithuanian families.

- **Explore the World Wise Schools online resources <http://www.peacecorps.gov> to learn more about the traditions of the people who live in Peace Corps host countries.**

Brief Encounters[10]

Class time needed: 40 minutes

Materials

- Cultural-norms sheets for the Pandya and Chispa cultures (half of the players will receive Pandya sheets and the other half Chispa sheets)
- Recorded music
- A whistle and a timer to help you pace the game

Objectives

- Students will gain skills in observing and describing behaviors.
- Students will develop an understanding of how our cultural values influence the way we view other groups.

Introduction

Science fiction fans will recognize a familiar theme as they participate in this simulation. Many science fiction authors have explored how humans will behave when we meet an alien race for the first time. "Brief Encounters" brings the question closer to home and asks students to explore the interaction of two cultures—**one outgoing and casual, the other more reserved and formal**—with very different social norms.

Procedure

1. Remove all furniture from the center of the classroom. Students will need space to move around.

2. Divide the participants into three groups. Two groups should be about the same size and should have roughly equal numbers of males and females, if possible. A smaller group of two to three students will act as observers.

3. Tell the observers that they will be watching closely as two different cultural groups interact. They may move among the participants, but they may not touch or speak to them. Their observations will help the class view the activity with a wider perspective during the debriefing.

4. Send the Pandya and Chispa groups to opposite corners of the room. Distribute copies of the Pandya cultural-norms sheets to one group and the Chispa cultural-norms sheets to the other group. Ask the members of each culture to read these sheets and to discuss their norms among themselves.

5. Visit the Pandyas and clarify their values. Emphasize the importance of staying in "character." Emphasize that the male students should be chaperoned at all times. Remind them of their reluctance to initiate contacts with people of other cultures.

6. Visit the Chispas and clarify their values. Emphasize the importance of making several brief contacts rather than a few lengthy ones. Define a contact as eliciting a verbal or a nonverbal response from a member of the other culture. Remind them of their friendly, outgoing nature and their eagerness to meet people from other cultures.

7. If students ask about the scoring system that appears on the norms sheets, tell them you will discuss this aspect of the game during the debriefing. Actually, you will not keep score. The point systems are printed on the norm sheets to establish a reward system for "good" behavior as defined by each of the two cultures.

8. Announce that the two student groups have been invited to a party sponsored by an international student exchange organization. The party organizers hope the two groups will get acquainted and learn about each other. When students return to their home schools, they will present culture reports to their classmates. The students are welcome to mingle, dance, and talk.

9. Start the music and let the two cultures interact. The teacher and student observers should walk among the groups, looking for behaviors that can be described and discussed during debriefing.

10. After 10 to 12 minutes, blow the whistle to end the party. Ask the students to meet once more in opposite corners of the room and to make notes for their culture reports.

11. Give each group about 10 minutes to create a brief report. The Chispas' report will describe the Pandya behavior and values that their classmates might expect to encounter if they visited the Pandya nation. The Pandyas will create a similar description of the Chispas.

12. Ask a representative from the Chispas to present the group's report to the class. Then ask a representative from the Pandyas to read that group's norms sheet. Ask the Chispas to note how their reports compared to the Pandyas' norms sheet.

13. Repeat with a Pandya representative sharing the group's report on the Chispas.

Debriefing

Use questions such as the following to guide discussion of how our cultural "biases" influence the way we view other groups. Be sure to ask the observers for their views on the participants' attempts to communicate across cultures and to maintain cultural norms.

1. How did you feel about the behavior of the members of your own group? Of the other group? Did your group's culture report use positive, negative, or neutral terms to describe the other group?

2. How did your group organize to observe the norms of your culture? During the party, what did you do if a member of your culture did not observe a particular norm?

3. Did your group attempt to keep score during the game? What are the real-world rewards for following cultural norms?

4. Ask students to discuss whether they agree or disagree with each of the following statements.
    - People have difficulty describing the behaviors of other groups in nonjudgmental terms.
    - People acquire cultural norms fairly quickly.
    - People seldom question the cultural norms that are handed to them.
    - Most of the group's norms are maintained through peer pressure.
    - Americans tend to feel uncomfortable without eye contact, even though in many parts of the world, eye contact is considered to be rude and impolite.
    - The same behavior can be perceived differently depending on your group's norms. For example, the same behavior appears friendly to Chispas and pushy to Pandyas.

5. What are some real-world situations that were illustrated during the game?

6. Pandya women were instructed to speak for the Pandya men. In what real-world situations does one group speak for another?

7. How would the game be different for players if the Pandya men dominated the women?

8. What would have happened if the two groups had been required to complete a science experiment or organize a field trip together? If the "party" had lasted for the entire class period?

9. What lessons from this activity would you want to keep in mind if you were going to spend time in an unfamiliar culture?

Extending the Ideas

- Ask students to list as many examples of cross-cultural experiences as they can. Remind them that not all cross-cultural experiences take place in other countries or between people who speak foreign languages or come from different racial backgrounds. Attending worship services, for example, with a friend who holds different religious beliefs is a cross-cultural experience. Brainstorm ideas about what students can do to encourage clear communication in such situations.

- If you are corresponding with a Peace Corps Volunteer, ask him or her to describe the typical conversational style of people in the host country. What adjustments did the Volunteer make to avoid misunderstandings in the host country?

- This lesson could lead to a service-learning project. If you have a multicultural class or have international exchange students in your school, help your students develop a project to foster better understanding and communication. Some ideas for action follow.
  - Conduct a survey to determine what communication difficulties, if any, exist among the students and between students and teachers.
  - Research the customs and culture of the groups that are represented in your class or school.
  - Plan a cultural awareness week.
  - Invite Returned Peace Corps Volunteers or parents of international students to speak to your students and share information about the language(s), culture, and customs of their countries.
  - Develop a feature article or regular column in the student newspaper that introduces various peoples and cultures.

Use the Service-Learning Rubric, found in the introduction to this teacher's guide, to plan a project that will have a strong impact.

You Are a Pandya

Pandya Cultural Norms

- **Pandyas** prefer to interact with members of their own culture.
- **Pandyas** do not initiate conversation. They speak only when spoken to.
- **Pandyas** have very formal speech patterns. For example, they always use "sir" and "ma'am."
- Among **Pandyas**, women have more status than men. Men are chaperoned by **Pandya** women.
- **Pandya** men avoid eye contact with women from other cultures.
- **Pandya** men do not talk directly to women from other cultures. They respond through their chaperones.
- **Pandya** men can talk to men from other cultures. They can maintain eye contact with men from other cultures.

Scoring

- **Pandyas** lose 1 point for initiating conversations with anyone from another culture.
- **Pandya** men lose 2 points for talking directly to women from another culture.
- **Pandya** women gain 1 point each time they respond to a woman from another culture on behalf of a **Pandya** man.

You Are a **Chispa**

Chispa Cultural Norms

- **Chispas** are informal and friendly.
- Among **Chispas**, there is no gender discrimination. Men and women behave the same way.
- **Chispas** are outgoing. They love to make contact with people from other cultures.
- **Chispas** contacts are brief and casual.
- **Chispas** are democratic and call everyone by first name.
- **Chispas** value cross-gender contacts more than same-gender contacts.

Scoring

- **Chispas** get 1 point for making a same-gender contact.
- **Chispas** get 2 points for making a cross-gender contact.
- **Chispas** lose 5 points if they fail to make a cross-gender contact within one minute.

Becoming Part of the Community

Class time needed: 40 minutes

Materials

Copies of "She's a Thai," "Drip Diplomacy," and "Features of Culture" for each student

Objectives

- Students will identify the features of culture experienced by Peace Corps Volunteers in two different countries.
- Students will identify the skills and attitudes required for successful cross-cultural experiences.

Introduction

Volunteers come to the Peace Corps from all the U.S. states and territories. Some are just out of college; some are just starting retirement. They represent a cross-section of ethnic and economic backgrounds. But when Volunteers return from their host countries, they share a new perspective on the world and its peoples. They appreciate the diversity of human life, and at the same time they treasure our common bonds.

There are many stories from Volunteers that describe a moment in which they realize that they have come to feel at home in their host countries. The following two stories illustrate that moment for two Volunteers.

Procedure

1. Review or introduce the "Features of Culture" printed at the beginning of this section. Emphasize the idea that these universals serve as a way of looking at the things that cultures have in common. For example, all cultures have ways of acquiring food. American families who shop at supermarkets and Ugandan families who grow almost everything they eat have that need in common.

2. Ask students to read "She's a Thai" and "Drip Diplomacy." As they read, they should look for details that correspond with the "Features of Culture" printed at the beginning of this section, and for evidence of the ways each Volunteer learned to fit into the host communities. Be sure students know that the stories do not correspond to all of the features of culture.

3. When students have finished reading, divide the class into several small groups. Have each group match details from the stories with as many features of culture as possible. Students should discuss and negotiate their ideas until all group members agree on the best representation. Each group's conclusions should be listed on a large sheet of paper and posted on a classroom wall. Then, as a full class, discuss the differences and similarities among the small-group observations.

4. Ask each group to identify two to three attitudes or actions that they believe helped the Volunteer have a successful experience in the host country.

Debriefing

Use the following questions to focus discussion of Sharon London's and Keith Talbot's experiences.

1. How does it feel to be in a place that is completely new to you?

2. What are some of the cultural differences that Sharon London and Keith Talbot faced in their host countries? *(Possible answers: new languages, different standards of courtesy and beauty, different foods)*

3. Which features of culture are most apparent in these readings?

4. What did the Volunteers do to learn to feel at home in their host communities? (Students will need to infer responses. Possible answers: The Volunteers carefully observed the behaviors and practices of their hosts; they made efforts to learn Spanish and Thai; they each approached their assignments with curiosity and a sense of humor.)

5. What lessons do these readings offer about dealing with unfamiliar situations or people?

6. What if these stories were written about the Volunteers from Thai or Dominican perspectives?

7. What are some questions you can ask yourself the next time you are puzzled by another person's way of doing things?

Extending the Ideas

- If your class is matched with a Peace Corps Volunteer through the World Wise Schools program, have students find examples of cultural universals in letters from the Volunteer.

- Have each student research the customs and norms of a country they would like to visit. Have students use the "Features of Culture" list to outline a report on the country they choose. The Peace Corps web site <http://www.peacecorps.gov> will be helpful in this activity.

She's a Thai[19]

This week I received a very special compliment: *"Sharon ben kone Thi laow."* ("Sharon is a Thai person.") What satisfaction—I am considered one of the gang. Yahoo! Seven months in this country, with three months of intensive training, have granted me the auspicious title of "Thai person."

What is it, however, that makes me "Thai" rather than "American"? Perhaps this question will explain why I can no longer easily pinpoint my identity, and why I often feel like the person I was eight months ago has been lost somewhere along the way in my travels to this place high in the mountains of northern Thailand.

First, let's look at my physical appearance. Sure, my hair is dark for a *farang* (a westerner), but it is brown and curly, not straight and black. It definitely cannot be my body. Not only am I taller than most Thai men and women, but I probably weigh more as well. At least nobody calls me fat, which Thais have no qualms about saying. (My threats to cry nonstop may be the reason *ooahp*, or shapely, has been used to describe me instead.) Also, I have far more body hair than any of my Thai friends and co-workers. Thai women rarely have arm, leg, or armpit hair. My eyes are round, my skin is white, and I have body hair. There is no mistaking me for a Thai.

Maybe, then, it's my food consumption. My spicy food intake is definitely increasing. I can eat sticky rice with no problem and actually even prefer it to steamed rice.

There is more to my "Thai-ness" than food, however. Possibly it's my conversational abilities. I can hold a simple conversation in Thai (and a tiny bit in the northern dialect, too). For example:

> *Sharon*: Hello.
> *Thai*: Hello.
> *Sharon*: Have you eaten yet?
> *Thai*: Yes. Have you eaten?
> *Sharon*: No. What did you eat with rice today?
> *Thai*: Spicy pepper dip. And what will you eat with rice today?
> *Sharon*: I don't know yet. Probably stir-fried vegetables.
> *Thai* (not knowing I don't eat meat): Will you eat beef or pork? Would you like some?
> *Sharon*: No thanks, just vegetables.

Occasionally, conversations go further:

> *Thai*: Do you have boyfriend? Are you married?
> *Sharon*: Nope, not yet.
> *Thai*: Do you want a Thai one? I know a nice guy.
> *Sharon*: Sure, only if he'll do all my laundry and cooking. And could you find me a couple? One won't be enough.

Yes, I would definitely say I am very Thai in my conversational patterns. I raise my voice in conversation more than I ever have in my past 24 years of life. I ask Thai people personal questions with no qualms, like how old they are, how much money they make, where they are going, and what they are eating. People in America may think I am prying upon my return.

Sharon London served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand from 1994 to 1996.

Drip Diplomacy [20]

Strange and subtle sometimes are the habits of courtesy. Water is a precious commodity out here in the *campo* (countryside). So there is a whole culture built around its acquisition and usage. If you go to any store or wait for a *guagua* (bus), the custom, usually, is to push or shove your way to the front. When it comes to water, at least in my community, the rules are different. I spent the morning collecting water for myself at the communal tap. The same *Doñas* who elbowed me aside in the *colmado* (corner store) last night made sure I got my water when it was my turn—first come, first served.

Water is one of the first things you offer a visiting Volunteer, water to drink and to wash off the dusty road. A good host is not stingy with his water even if he has to go through great effort to get it. A good guest notices how difficult it is to get the water and limits her usage accordingly. Even better, the guest helps replace the water used.

Volunteers from water-poor communities are often quick to notice the lavish habits of Volunteers from water-rich communities. "I can't believe she used three full gallons to take a bath. You'd think she were washing an elephant." On the other hand, Volunteers from water-rich communities are struck by the unreasonable stinginess of the water-poor. "He hoarded water like it was gold at Fort Knox, rationing it out drop by drop."

I consider myself a decent host in this area. I keep about 15 gallons in my house almost all the time. Since the average Volunteer uses about three to four gallons a day, that's a pretty good quantity.

I never tire of marveling at the combinations of strength and grace displayed by the women and girls who carry five gallons on their heads, with a gallon in each hand. My favorite is when they casually turn to chat with a neighbor, blithely ignoring the burden with which they are laden. I once watched a woman gracefully bend down and pluck a *peso* without spilling a precious drop!

I carry the water on my shoulder. I've assumed that the wide berth the folks give me is not due to unpleasant body odor, but because of the constant splashes that leap forth from my bucket. But I'm improving. Now, people rarely ask me if I've recently gone swimming after I've actually been carrying water. And the water source is one of the best places to catch the latest gossip. I have concluded that *chesmes* (rumors) are flying due to the occasional, *"No me digas!"* ("Don't tell me!") and *"Adquerosa!"* ("Gross!") that escapes from their mouths while they are huddled over the tap.

I suppose that's what I like best about the water collection process. It's one of the places where I fit into the community best. My Spanish is what it is, and I do remain the *gringo*. Yet, I understand the rules at the tap and even some of the subtleties. The community sees I am on even ground with them and ask no privileges. It is a calm and orderly place. Maybe I will fondly remember the communal tap when I am reaching for the hot water faucet in the shower. And then again. . .

Keith Talbot served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Dominican Republic from 1993 to 1995.

Endnotes

[6] Emily Harker served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Zambia from 1996 to 1998. This comment is taken from her correspondence with students at Eisenhower Middle School in Morristown, Pennsylvania.

[7] Dan Barutta served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Jamaica from 1981 to 1983. This comment is taken from an interview with him in March 1997.

[8] Brown, Ina Corinne, *Understanding Other Cultures* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall/ Simon and Schuster, 1963), p. 140.

[9] Adapted from *Promoting Harmony: A Compilation of Sample Lessons, Grades K-12* (Brooklyn: New York City Board of Education, 1992), by permission of the Board of Education of the City of New York.

[10] Adapted from *Culture Matters: The Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Workbook* (Washington, D.C.: Peace Corps, 1997), a book of activities designed to help Peace Corps Volunteers adapt to and understand the people of their host countries.

[11] Lisa Buchwalder served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Mongolia from 1993 to 1995. This comment is taken from a letter she wrote to her World Wise Schools class in the U.S. dated November 9, 1994.

[12] Adapted from *HOT TOPICS: Usable Research: Appreciating Differences: Teaching and Learning in a Culturally Diverse Classroom* by Evelyn Ploumis-Devick, Ph.D., with Joseph Follman (South Eastern Regional Vision for Education, 1993).

[13] The original version of this lesson appears in *Lessons From Africa: A Supplement to Middle School Courses in World Cultures, Global Studies, and World Geography,* Merry M. Merryfield, editor (Bloomington, Indiana: ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, 1989).

[14] Adapted with permission from *Diversity Simulation Games* by Sivasailam Thiagarajan, (Amherst, Massachusetts: HRD Press, 1995).

[15] Kristyn Leftridge served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Morocco from 1990 to 1992.

[16] Additional "Hello Data" is available on the internet at the Peace Corps web site under "Volunteer Views" at <http://www.peacecorps.gov/www/dp/wws1.html>.

[17] Michelle Fisher served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Lithuania from 1993 to 1995.

[18] Adapted with permission from *Diversity Simulation Games* by Sivasailam Thiagarajan.

[19] Reprinted from *Peace Corps Times*, Number 2, 1995, p. 17.

[20] Reprinted from *Peace Corps Times*, Number 2, 1995, p. 36.

PART II:

DEVELOPING GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

We got to the town where we would do our training for the next three months, and I wondered where all the houses were because all I could see were garages, or what I thought were garages. The houses were very different from what my concept of a house was. There were no yards on the outside like I had grown up with in Minnesota.

-Monica Fitzgerald[21]

People expected Americans to behave in a certain way. They expected all Americans to be blonde. They have a lot of U.S. movies and videos. . .people always expected Americans to be rich.

-Jean Deal[22]

Although late 20th century advances in transportation and communications promise a smaller, more accessible world, we each perceive that world through the filters of our individual experiences and cultural development. Still, cross-cultural contact is a fact of our local, national, and global lives. It is more important than ever that each of us develop an inclusive global perspective that celebrates diversity and promotes tolerance.

The experiences of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers like Monica Fitzgerald and Jean Deal illustrate the dual mission of the Peace Corps: to teach and to learn. A Volunteer learns quickly that her view of the world will be challenged daily by the unfamiliar. By living and working alongside host country residents, Volunteers also have the opportunity to demonstrate the diversity of American culture. The stories of Returned Volunteers are stories of adaptation and acceptance, of how to be at home anywhere in the world (see "Sunday Morning Stares" on following page).

Global education experts Jan Drum, Steve Hughes, and George Otero have articulated the need to bring concepts such as diversity, adaptation, and acceptance to the attention of our students:

> *"Educated people today need to be aware that their view of the world is only one of many. . . . Teachers need to help young people become conscious of their own world views. Once students have clarified their beliefs, they can begin to imagine how others might see things differently; they can try to understand and empathize with people who see things from a different angle."*[23]

The activities included in this section address these goals by helping students identify the factors that shape their individual views, promoting active appreciation for diversity in their classroom and world communities, and providing tools for analyzing information sources. Teachers are encouraged to review all the activities and to select or adapt the materials that are most appropriate for their students.

Sunday Morning Stares[24]

The Sunday morning walk to St. Gregory the Great Catholic Church of Sogeri is two kilometers from my little red house on the Iarowari High School grounds. Today is Palm Sunday. I'm walking the Sogeri road. The weight of the sun is like an invisible heat blanket bleaching my hair, trying to set it ablaze.

Tall kunai grass towers on both sides. Wild bushes sprouting magnificent colored flowers climb the hills on the right side. Strange, crooked, randomly spiraling palm trees eerily look down on the tar like the background of a Salvador Dali painting. An unseen stream rolls over its rocky bed then reminds me of its presence down below the grassy hill on the left.

As I turn the corner coming up near the school rugby oval, I get a feeling. Unavoidable. It will stay with me until I'm back in my little red house. Some people are sitting on a fallen tree on the hill overlooking the rugby field and some more are walking my way. A woman and three children. I'm on stage. I'm a showpiece, a curiosity, a foreigner. Painfully aware, I'm a white man in Papua New Guinea. I don't mean to say that the Papua New Guineans never see whites. But one who lives amongst them? A man who walks the same road as they do, eats the same food, teaches their children? A white man who doesn't live in some expensive palace in Moresby going about his day beyond the barbed wire, acting as if he were back in his own country?

The stares come. They come from all directions. I pass the people on the fallen tree, but I still feel their looks on my back. The women and children pass me. A greeting of *"Moning nau"* is exchanged, but the children gawk. I give a smile and happily receive one back.

Where I came from (a small Midwestern town) did not prepare me to be at center stage, every moment of each day. I am the middle of nine children. At college I was a study in average. Comfortably packed in with the rest, a perfectly capable student, but one who never racked his brains with school. I sailed on the wave of the fat section of the bell curve. Last year, I remember thinking, "I don't want to get a job, in a few years a wife. I want to see the world! I want to be different!" Good Lord, I'm different now.

The stares keep coming, and for some unknown reason a lonely feeling creeps in. The "I wish I could talk to my family" feeling. The "far away in the middle of nowhere feeling." I fight it back down my throat. I want to sit. I want to close my eyes and imagine. Imagine that I can lose myself in a crowd, that I can look like everyone else. I want my hair to curl up into tight little dark balls and my skin to turn brown. I want to sit somewhere and have people walk by without staring, without even noticing. This spotlight is as bright and constant as the sun that has now reached every part of my body. Sweat drips down off my nose and makes a dark wet spot on my shirt.

I'm passing the community school now and two of my students have caught up with me. They give me a happy look and prepare to absorb some of the stares. Mostly they get stares of their own which say, "You two are with him, huh?" To which they smile and nod, "That's right, he's a *Taubada*, but he's OK, he's with us." I nod as if to affirm the silent conversation. I feel as accepted as I'll ever be. An appreciated stranger.

We pass an old man who has found a nice piece of shade. I recognize him. Local guy. A Papuan with a small belly and a baseball cap on. His hair has big Afro curls and his Melanesian eyes are spread apart. His teeth are stained a blackish red from a life's worth of betel nut chewing. Even though my Motu is limited to a few words, I mix some in with a Pidgin greeting, *"Ah Tura, namo. Yo Orait, eh? Gutpela, lukim."*

My effort shows a lack of ignorance more than any great knowledge. He smiles and gives a quick wave of his hand. The lonely feeling makes a quick exit; I breathe in the beautiful morning and exotic surroundings. My students turn off to the Lutheran Church after the wooden bridge that looks as if it was built during World War II. The stares appear more like curious looks that make me smile as I walk on. I can see St. Gregory the Great Church. It is a little bigger than my father's garage back in Michigan, but today it has the feel of a cathedral. All kinds of palms decorate inside and out. The colorful flowers have made their way into the church. They cover the altar and crucifix. I'm early. I sit down and place my elbows on my tanned knees to brace my head. More stares come my way, accompanied by the muffled giggles of some young girls in the back of the church. A thought enters my mind. All these stares, every look shot my way by the dark eyes of the PNG, they are 100 percent curiosity, zero percent animosity. They just want to know something about me. They want to feel my hair, pull my beard, touch my arm. They want to hear stories from the land of Rambo and Arnold Schwarzenegger. They want to see pictures of New York and find out if people actually kiss in public in my hometown. They want to hear about a football stadium filled with 100,000 screaming fans or ask how many times I've seen Mohammed Ali. Pure curiosity. Racial hatred hasn't come alive here yet. They just want to know something about me and my place.

Mass is starting and we all move outside to form a procession into the church, traditional Palm Sunday style. I've made a decision just now. Occasionally a loneliness that lessens over time and being on stage most of the day are small prices to pay for knowing this country and its people. I suddenly feel good about today, St. Gregory's Church, the Sogeri Plateau, Papua New Guinea, and, yes, even the look the man sitting beside me gives me right before he shakes my hand and says, "Peace be with you."

Daniel Laboe served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Papua New Guinea from 1992 to 1994.

First Impressions

Class time needed: 40 minutes

Materials

"First Impressions" worksheet for each student

Objectives

- Students will recognize that a single observation can be misleading.
- Students will get to know one another.

Introduction

Young children often make assumptions and judgments about people based on quick impressions. For example, a little girl noticing a house with peeling paint and an unkempt yard told her aunt, "I bet the people who live in that house are ugly." The girl had somehow learned to make assumptions about people she had never met based on her perception of their possessions.

Given our tendency to link appearances to personality or cultural traits, the little girl's comment is not surprising. Each of us, regardless of age, has probably experienced the embarrassment of making a faulty assumption based on scant evidence. This exercise can be used to point out the importance of making careful observations and of avoiding judgment. It also serves as a community-building activity.

Procedure

1. To begin the activity, have students make lists of their favorite things. Tell them to keep these lists as they will be referring to them later.

2. Divide the students into groups of two. If possible, pair students who do not know each other well. Give each student a copy of the "First Impressions" worksheet.

3. Assign the following tasks.
    - Without speaking to your partner, think of at least five things you believe he or she likes (e.g., favorite color, activities, music, food). Base your ideas only on what you can learn about your partner from what you can see. List your ideas in the first column on your paper.
    - In the second column, write down the evidence that supports each of your ideas.

4. Once students have completed their lists, ask them to interview each other to find out if their observations are accurate. You may want to model the following dialogue.

> ***Student A:*** I see you have a Pittsburgh Steelers sticker on your notebook. You must like football.
>
> ***Student B:*** No, you're wrong. My brother is the football fan. He put these stickers on everything in the house after his favorite team won the Super Bowl.
>
> ***Student A:*** But you must like to read. You have two library books with you.
>
> ***Student B:*** You're right about that. I read a lot in my spare time. Since you're a girl, I'll bet you like to shop.
>
> ***Student A:*** Shopping is fun, but I didn't list it as one of my favorite activities. I'd rather play computer games.

As students conduct their interviews, they should use the third column to note corrections and to add more information about their initial observations.

Debriefing

After students have completed their interviews, bring the full class together to discuss the activity. The following questions can be used to focus the discussion.

1. How did it feel to know that someone was making guesses about the things you like without talking to you?

2. What happened when you talked with your partners about your observations? Were your original conclusions mostly right or mostly wrong? Did you find that you like similar things or different things?

3. What would you say are the important things to remember about first impressions?

4. What are some problems that can occur when people make assumptions without very much evidence?

5. What if you did this activity with someone much older than yourself or with someone from another country? How would you make accurate guesses about their favorite things?

6. What are some things you can do to make sure that your ideas about people and places are fair?

Extending the Ideas

- Ask students to use the information gathered during their interviews to introduce their partners to other members of the class.

- Have students design posters that illustrate their partners' lists of favorite things. Displayed in the classroom, these would serve as a visual reminder of individual traits and shared interests. These displays could be updated throughout the school year as students get to know each other better.

- Invite international exchange students or Returned Peace Corps Volunteers to the class to talk about their first impressions of people in their host countries. Did their perspective change over time?

- If your class is writing to a Peace Corps Volunteer, try to find out how experience in the host country changed his or her initial impressions.

- Ask the newest students in the class to share their first impressions of your school and the class. Have your class then brainstorm ideas to help new students have a positive beginning in your school. If there is a need to assist new students in their adjustment, this could be developed into a service-learning project. See the Introduction to *Looking at Ourselves and Others* for a Service-Learning Rubric.

First Impressions

What I Think My Partner Likes	Evidence to Support What I Think	What My Partner Said About My Observation

The Blind Men and the Elephant[25]

Class time needed: 20 minutes

Materials
One copy of "The Blind Men and the Elephant"

Objectives
- Students will develop sensitivity to others' points of view.
- Students will understand the importance of having as much information as possible before coming to conclusions.

This retelling of a traditional story from India illustrates how different people can have distinctly different perceptions of the same thing. Students will readily see the faulty thinking behind the blind men's arguments, but they may need some help understanding that even when presented with a real elephant, each man could "see" only what he already believed to be true. Use this story to encourage your students to develop perspective awareness—awareness that each of us creates a unique view of the world based on personal experience, language, and culture.

Procedure
Since "The Blind Men and the Elephant" is a folktale from oral tradition, you may want to rehearse the story several times and tell it rather than read it to your class. Before you present the story, ask students to give their interpretations of the word "see." Reinforce the idea that to see can mean to perceive something visually or to understand an idea. Ask students to listen to the story for examples of both definitions.

Debriefing
After students have heard the story, use the following questions to guide discussion of how differences in perspective can make it difficult for people to communicate. Students should be encouraged to apply the moral of the folktale to real-life situations.

1. How does it feel when another person doesn't "see" something the same way you do?

2. What happens in the story when each blind man "sees" the elephant? Why were there six different ideas about the elephant? Were any of the men right about the elephant? Were any of them completely wrong?

3. What did the blind men learn from the Rajah? What does the storyteller want us to learn from this tale?

4. Do problems like this happen in real life? Think of times when arguments or misunderstandings have occurred because people see situations from different points of view. Describe what happened.

5. What if the men in this story were not blind? Would they still have different ideas about elephants?

6. Does the story give you any ideas about how these problems can be solved? What are some steps you can take to understand why another person doesn't see things the way you do?

Extending the Ideas

- Ask students to write an extension of the story that includes the conversation the six men might have had as they journeyed home.

- Have students write original stories that illustrate the importance of perspective-awareness.

- Ask students to write and perform a skit based on the story. The skit could be performed for other classes, and the performers could guide a debriefing with their audience.

- Have students work in groups of six to create group illustrations of the story. Alternatively, have them use recycled materials to create a sculpture of the elephant combining the perspectives of the six blind men.

- Encourage students to talk about misunderstandings they experience or observe that seem to be the result of clashes between points of view. Work with students to role-play behavior that resolves the misunderstanding.

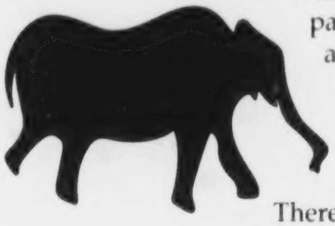
- If your class is corresponding with a Peace Corps Volunteer, ask him or her to provide some examples of differences in how people in the host country view the world and the way Americans "see" things. What has the Volunteer learned from these differences?

The Blind Men and the Elephant

Long ago six old men lived in a village in India. Each was born blind. The other villagers loved the old men and kept them away from harm. Since the blind men could not see the world for themselves, they had to imagine many of its wonders. They listened carefully to the stories told by travelers to learn what they could about life outside the village.

The men were curious about many of the stories they heard, but they were most curious about elephants. They were told that elephants could trample forests, carry huge burdens, and frighten young and old with their loud trumpet calls. But they also knew that the Rajah's daughter rode an elephant when she traveled in her father's kingdom. Would the Rajah let his daughter get near such a dangerous creature?

The old men argued day and night about elephants. "An elephant must be a powerful giant," claimed the first blind man. He had heard stories about elephants being used to clear forests and build roads.



"No, you must be wrong," argued the second blind man. "An elephant must be graceful and gentle if a princess is to ride on its back."

"You're wrong! I have heard that an elephant can pierce a man's heart with its terrible horn," said the third blind man.

"Please," said the fourth blind man. "You are all mistaken. An elephant is nothing more than a large sort of cow. You know how people exaggerate."

"I am sure that an elephant is something magical," said the fifth blind man. "That would explain why the Rajah's daughter can travel safely throughout the kingdom."

"I don't believe elephants exist at all," declared the sixth blind man. "I think we are the victims of a cruel joke."

Finally, the villagers grew tired of all the arguments, and they arranged for the curious men to visit the palace of the Rajah to learn the truth about elephants. A young boy from their village was selected to guide the blind men on their journey. The smallest man put his hand on the boy's shoulder. The second blind man put his hand on his friend's shoulder, and so on until all six men were ready to walk safely behind the boy who would lead them to the Rajah's magnificent palace.

When the blind men reached the palace, they were greeted by an old friend from their village who worked as a gardener on the palace grounds. Their friend led them to the courtyard. There stood an elephant. The blind men stepped forward to touch the creature that was the subject of so many arguments.

The first blind man reached out and touched the side of the huge animal. "An elephant is smooth and solid like a wall!" he declared. "It must be very powerful."

The second blind man put his hand on the elephant's limber trunk. "An elephant is like a giant snake," he announced.

The third blind man felt the elephant's pointed tusk. "I was right," he decided. "This creature is as sharp and deadly as a spear."

The fourth blind man touched one of the elephant's four legs. "What we have here," he said, "is an extremely large cow."

The fifth blind man felt the elephant's giant ear. "I believe an elephant is like a huge fan or maybe a magic carpet that can fly over mountains and treetops," he said.

The sixth blind man gave a tug on the elephant's fuzzy tail. "Why, this is nothing more than a piece of old rope. Dangerous, indeed," he scoffed.

The gardener led his friends to the shade of a tree. "Sit here and rest for the long journey home," he said. "I will bring you some water to drink."

While they waited, the six blind men talked about the elephant.

"An elephant is like a wall," said the first blind man. "Surely we can finally agree on that."

"A wall? An elephant is a giant snake!" answered the second blind man.

"It's a spear, I tell you," insisted the third blind man.

"I'm certain it's a giant cow," said the fourth blind man.

"Magic carpet. There's no doubt," said the fifth blind man.

"Don't you see?" pleaded the sixth blind man. "Someone used a rope to trick us."

Their argument continued and their shouts grew louder and louder.

"Wall!" "Snake!" "Spear!" "Cow!" "Carpet!" "Rope!"

"STOP SHOUTING!" called a very angry voice.

It was the Rajah, awakened from his nap by the noisy argument.

"How can each of you be so certain you are right?" asked the ruler.

The six blind men considered the question. And then, knowing the Rajah to be a very wise man, they decided to say nothing at all.

"The elephant is a very large animal," said the Rajah kindly. "Each man touched only one part. Perhaps if you put the parts together, you will see the truth. Now, let me finish my nap in peace."

When their friend returned to the garden with the cool water, the six men rested quietly in the shade, thinking about the Rajah's advice.

"He is right," said the first blind man. "To learn the truth, we must put all the parts together. Let's discuss this on the journey home."

The first blind man put his hand on the shoulder of the young boy who would guide them home. The second blind man put a hand on his friend's shoulder, and so on until all six men were ready to travel together.

Retold by Donelle Blubaugh

Opposites

Class time needed: 30 minutes

Materials

Pencils and paper

Objectives

- Students will recognize that their classmates hold a variety of opinions.
- Students will identify factors that influence perspective and opinion.

Introduction

This activity is designed to illustrate the variety of perspectives and opinions represented in the class. It will help students understand that perceptions are influenced by personal experience and taste as well as cultural background. This is a good opportunity to help students get to know each other better by recognizing the variety of cultures and talents represented in their community.

Procedure

Tell your students that you would like them to explore their opinions about a topic of current interest.

1. Ask the students to choose a category such as school, music, food, television, or a theme currently being discussed in a curricular area.

2. Present the students with a list of opposites describing a variety of opinions and perspectives such as rich/poor, beautiful/ugly, easy/difficult, delicious/disgusting, boring/interesting.

3. Ask each student to write down the name of an activity, a thing, or an idea (not a person!) that represents each concept. Encourage students to respond according to their honest feelings, not according to what is cool or funny.

4. Once students have completed their individual lists, have students share some of their responses. As a group, look at the variety of perceptions represented by the students' lists.

Debriefing

Use the following questions to help students reflect on the ways we form opinions.

1. How do you feel when someone disagrees with your opinion about something?

2. How many different examples of things that are delicious did we collect? Is there any one thing that we could all agree is delicious?

3. Why do you think there are so many differences of opinion about these ideas? What did you learn about our class when we compared our opinions?

4. What might happen if we asked every student in our school to do this activity? What would our community be like if everyone had the same preferences and opinions?

5. What are some ways differences can be used to make a community work better?

Extending the Ideas

- Use this activity as a starting point for building a class service directory similar to those found in community newspapers and telephone books. Students can work together to develop a questionnaire that probes individual student interests and talents. Then have students design advertising pages for each other based on responses to the questionnaire. (For example: "Need help with math? Contact Tonya Johnson, our class expert." "Ron Nguyen is a terrific artist! Let him know if you're a writer with a story to illustrate." "Maria Rodriguez has an amazing collection of baseball cards. Call her when you're ready to trade.") Be sure to help those students who may have trouble identifying special skills or interests and encourage students with complementary talents to develop group advertisements.

- Invite a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer or someone from your community who has spent time in other countries to talk to your class about how perceptions of rich / poor, beautiful / ugly, delicious / disgusting, etc. vary from culture to culture. Contact World Wise Schools for a list of Returned Volunteers in your area (e-mail: <dpinfo@peacecorps.gov>; phone: 800-424-8580).

- If you are corresponding with a current Peace Corps Volunteer, ask for comments on how his or her perspective on concepts such as good / bad, rich / poor, or easy / difficult has changed in the host country.

Is That a Fact?

Class time needed: 30 minutes

Materials

"Is That a Fact?" worksheets for each group of four to five students

Objectives

- Students will articulate the difference between fact and opinion.
- Students will identify ways to clarify or qualify statements of opinion.

Introduction

Understanding the difference between fact and opinion is critical to our ability to examine our reactions to events and people. Stereotypes and prejudices are often based on opinions that are perceived as facts. Skills practiced during this activity can be reinforced using content from textbooks, magazines, and newspapers, as well as from correspondence with your Peace Corps Volunteer if your class is participating in a World Wise Schools match program.

Procedure

1. Write three examples of facts on one side of the board and three examples of opinions on the other side of the board.

Examples of facts:
George has blue eyes.
This room has four windows.
There are 50 states in the United States.

Examples of opinions:
This room is too warm.
Math class is boring.
The best cars are made in the United States.

2. Ask students to identify the statements of fact and the statements of opinion. Label each group.

3. Have students work with partners to come up with definitions for the words "fact" and "opinion." Choose a class definition, using a dictionary or a language arts textbook if necessary.

4. Divide the class into small groups of four to five students each. Provide each group with a copy of the worksheet "Is That A Fact?" Ask one student in each group to cut the sheet into strips as indicated. That student should "deal" the strips out to the group's members until all of the strips have been distributed.

5. Have each small group divide its work space into three areas, one labeled "Facts," another "Opinions," and the third "Need More Information." Have students work together to place the statements in the appropriate areas according to the definitions they agreed upon earlier.

6. As you monitor the group activity, ask representatives from each group to explain how the group is deciding to place the statements. Make sure their decisions followed the agreed upon definitions for fact and opinion.

7. Ask students to examine the statements in the "Need More Information" category. Have them work together to identify sources of information that would prove or disprove the statements.

Debriefing

When the small groups have completed their work, bring the whole class back together to discuss the process. Use the following questions to check student understanding of the difference between fact and opinion.

1. How can you tell whether something is a fact or an opinion?

2. What makes it difficult to decide if something is a fact or an opinion?

3. When you were working in small groups, did everyone agree on which statements were fact and which were opinion? Could any of the opinion statements be considered facts if we had more information or if the statement were more specific? (Example: When it comes to math scores, this is the best school in the whole town.)

4. If you're not sure whether something is a fact, what can you do?

5. Why is it important to know whether something is a fact or an opinion?

Extending the Ideas

- Have students rewrite the statements identified as opinions using qualifying phrases (e.g., I think, according to the book I read, etc.) or more specific language.

- Have students watch one or more of the World Wise Schools *Destination* video tapes. Ask students to listen for and record facts and opinions as they watch. Compare responses in small groups.

- Have your students read essays by Peace Corps Volunteers or other pieces of writing to find examples of facts and opinions. Check the World Wise Schools online resources for letters from Peace Corps Volunteers or use the excerpt, "Living in a Traditional African Way" from an interview with Volunteer Craig Benson. The entire interview can be found on the Peace Corps web site at <http://www.peacecorps.gov/www/dp/interview/wwsin2.html>.

Is That a Fact?

Girls are smarter than boys.

Americans love French fries.

Americans are friendly.

Men are usually taller than women.

The world is a better place now than it was 100 years ago.

There is more farm land in the United States than in any other country.

Today is a beautiful day.

Most people in Africa live in urban areas.

This is the best school in the whole town.

Women make better teachers than men.

Most people in Honduras are unhappy.

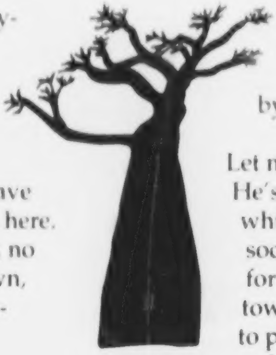
The U.S.A. is the richest country in the world.

Living in a Traditional African Way

The following reading is adapted from an interview conducted with Craig Benson during his Peace Corps service in Cameroon in Central Africa between 1990 and 1993.

The thing that's really important no matter where you go are the friends that you meet, the people that you love, and the people with whom you share life. I have some really great neighbors here. In particular, I have a family—five children, two parents—with whom I'm close. The wife is a leader of a farming group that I work with. She introduced me to her farming group, which has turned out to be one of the best. That family welcomed me in a very traditional African way.

When I first came to the house they brought me food for three months. I didn't cook. They brought me two meals a day. I got to try out all the different kinds of African foods. They would always invite me out for any occasion, invite me to come to the church, invite me to the farm, invite me to this baptism, invite me to go to this "cry-die," which is what they say for a funeral, or to this "born-house," which is a birth celebration when a woman has a baby.



They showed me the village and have watched out for me since I've been here. It's those kind of people that really, no matter how much the chips go down, make an experience like this worthwhile.

Let me tell you about one friend I have. He's a young man here in the village who hadn't been in school for some time. When I came, I asked for someone to help me around the house—not really so much for cleaning, but to show me where to get water and how to do things in the village. That young man, Dan, has become a good friend. We have a poultry project going on.

You couldn't buy eggs anywhere in Ande, so Dan and I put our heads together and said, "Well, we both like to eat eggs, so let's get some day-old chicks." And, sure enough, now we have poultry and they're grown. They're giving us eggs. So I've just put Dan in complete control of that. I've taught him the ropes about what diseases poultry can get, what kind of feed to give them, how to get a lot of eggs, what kind of green feed, bone meal, sand, and ants they need. We're feeding them well and it's a nice demonstration. People come to see it and ask why our fowls are so big and theirs are so small. They ask why ours are alive and theirs are dead (because they've died in the dry season).

We're getting some revenue from it, which Dan is controlling. He collects eggs. My deal with him is, "You just give me the eggs I need to eat, and the rest is yours." He manages it—saves the money from it to buy more feed and then whatever is left over he uses. He's actually put himself back in school. He's been able to sponsor himself through school by taking care of some chickens.

Let me say one more thing about Dan. He's teaching me how to play football, which is very important! I'm a terrible soccer player—football is what they say for soccer. And it's the only game in town—it doesn't matter if I know how to play basketball, baseball, volleyball, and all the rest—you can't play them here. Football is it. So I said, "Dan, I'll help you with the fowls. I'll help you with anything, but you've got to teach me how to play football." So I'm getting better. It's been a year, but I'm only up to the level of high school-age players. I play with little kids, and that's about as good as I am. I'm not as good as people my same age, but I'm on my way!

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How Accurate Is It? [26]

Class time needed: 40 minutes

Materials

- "How Accurate Is It" worksheets for every two students
- Pencils and paper

Objective

- Students will learn to identify and modify generalizations.

Introduction

This activity introduces students to the difficult concept of generalization so that they will challenge generalizations made about people, insist on knowing the evidence that supports these, and be willing to modify their own generalizations when confronted by evidence showing them to be false. It is important for students to understand that almost all generalizations, particularly those about people, need to be qualified. The activity also asks students to practice using qualifying language.

Procedure

1. Explain the meaning of "general" and "specific" using objects in the room or pictures to illustrate your point (e.g., "This horse is black" versus "All horses are black").

2. Write the following statement on the board: "Snakes are harmful." Ask students to write whether they agree or disagree with the statement at the top of a sheet of paper. Then read each the following questions aloud. Have students write "yes" or "no" in response to each question.
    - Are all snakes harmful?
    - Are most snakes harmful?
    - Are many snakes harmful?
    - Are some snakes harmful?
    - Are a few snakes harmful?
    - Do you know about all snakes?
    - Is the statement "Snakes are harmful" true?

3. As a class, explore the following questions.
    - How many students agreed with the statement on the board? How many students answered no to the seventh question? What made you change your mind?
    - What words can you add to the statement "Snakes are harmful" to make it more accurate (e.g., some snakes, many snakes, a few snakes in Asia)?
    - What can you add to the statement to show that you don't have a lot of factual information about snakes (e.g., as far as I know, I'm not sure, in my experience)?

4. Have students work in small groups to evaluate the accuracy of the generalizations listed on the "How Accurate Is It?" worksheet. Encourage them to discuss their reasoning and come to consensus on each statement. Then have students work in pairs to rewrite each statement using the qualifying phrases discussed above so that it is as accurate as possible.

5. As a class, discuss the conclusions of each group, paying close attention to how the statements were qualified.

Debriefing

Use the following questions to guide a brainstorming session to help students recognize generalizations and begin using qualifying language.

1. Have you ever heard anyone use a generalization to describe you or another person? How does it feel when someone does that?

2. What happened when we used a generalization to describe snakes? Was the statement accurate? What happened when we used qualifiers to describe snakes? When you filled out the worksheet, which statements were more difficult to evaluate—the statements about things, or the statements about people?

3. What are some ways we could complete the following sentences?
   We should try not to use generalizations because ________ .
   It is important to use qualified statements because ________.

4. What can you do if you hear someone using generalizations to describe a person or a group of people? (Help students articulate some nonconfrontational ways to respond to generalized descriptions.)

Extending the Ideas

- Watch one or more World Wise Schools *Destination* video tapes. Ask students to listen for and record the qualified statements made in the tape. (Example: Most people in Honduras live in the mountains.)

- Ask students to collect examples of generalizations from advertising. Discuss why advertisers use generalizations and have students revise generalized statements to make them more accurate.

- Use returned Peace Corps Volunteer Julie Kaminsky's description of education in Gaoual, Guinea, in West Africa to help students recognize generalizations and qualified statements. Have them work in pairs to read the article and identify the statements that indicate that Julie Kaminsky was trying not to generalize. Then have them locate any generalizations. (For a complete list of "Volunteer Views," visit World Wise Schools on the Peace Corps web site at <http://www.peacecorps.gov/www/dp/wws1.html>.

How Accurate Is It?

Directions: Read each statement carefully. Then ask yourself the following questions.

- Are all (or almost all) baseballs (or elephants, etc.) white (strong, etc.)?
- Are most baseballs (or elephants, etc.) white (strong, etc.)?
- Are some. . .?
- Are a few. . .?
- Do you know about. . .?

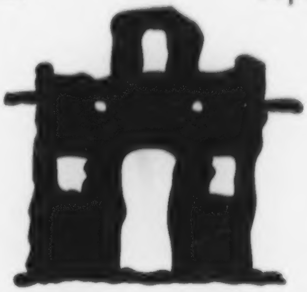
Put a check in the box that shows how accurate each statement is.

Statement	How Accurate It Is					
	all or almost all	most	many	some	few	don't know
1. Baseballs are white.						
2. Elephants are strong.						
3. Fish have gills.						
4. Spiders are poisonous.						
5. Candy is bad for your teeth.						
6. Babies cry.						
7. Politicians are dishonest.						
8. Teachers are smarter than children.						
9. Americans are rich.						
10. Poor people are lazy.						

School in Guinea, West Africa

I served in Guinea in West Africa. My town, Gaoual, was predominantly Moslem, and most children attended several years of Koranic school before they started regular classes in elementary school. While children could begin school as young as six years old, most started when they were eight or nine years old. Official statistics are difficult to obtain, but I was told that around 50 percent of all children attend elementary school (grades one to six).

In sixth grade, students take a national exam to get into middle school, and about half will continue. After that, each year school children must take exams to go on to the next grade level. Many don't pass on the first try and most will repeat a grade at least once or twice somewhere along the way. At the end of tenth grade, students take an exam to attend either high school or technical school (to become a carpenter, nurse, plumber, etc.). Only about 10 percent of all children actually attend through high school. My eleventh grade class had about 40 students; the twelfth grade class had 17; the "terminal" (final year of high school) had only four students.



By the time students complete "terminal" they are usually 20 to 24 years old. Generally, children come to school Monday through Saturday. Middle school and high school students attend three classes daily, each two hours long: in the morning from 8 to 10 and 10:15 to 12:15 p.m., and in the afternoon from 12:15 to 2:15. Some subjects take only one hour, so the second half of the two-hour block the students have free time.

Students attend classes October through May, with national and local exams held in June. July, August, and September are summer vacation (the rainy season). During the month of Ramadan (a Moslem religious month when all adults fast during daylight hours) older students and teachers fast but continue to come to class. All state holidays are days off and there are one-week vacations twice a year: December 25 to January 1 and April 4 to 11, standard throughout the country.

Julie Kaminsky served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Gaoual, a town in the northwest corner of Guinea, from 1993 to 1994.

Good News/Bad News/Who Cares?

Class time needed: Approximately 40 minutes

Materials

- One "Good News/Bad News/Who Cares?" activity sheet for each student
- Pencils and paper
- Almanacs and other reference materials

Objective

- Students will recognize that there are many ways of interpreting a single piece of information.

Introduction

To develop global perspectives, students need to form the habit of reflecting on the sources of their own opinions and reactions. This activity asks students to respond to a series of facts, analyze their reactions, and compare their responses. Students will also practice viewing factual information from multiple perspectives and work to develop awareness of the hidden biases in "factual" statements.

Procedure

1. Distribute copies of the "Good News/Bad News/Who Cares?" activity sheet to students. Explain that the statements are based on accurate research and can be believed to be true.

2. Instruct students to read each statement in the "Fact" column, then quickly note their response to each statement in one of the response columns. Is the statement good news, bad news, or just an uninteresting fact (Who Cares?)? For those statements interpreted as good news or bad news, students should jot a few words in the "Why?" column to explain their feelings.

3. Once students have completed their charts, tally their responses to each statement. Are a variety of opinions represented? Or did students have similar responses to the same facts? What factors might account for this? Ask individual students to share the thinking behind their opinions. Discuss why some statements did not elicit strong opinions (e.g., some statements may not contain enough information to warrant an opinion, others may simply not provoke the interest of individual students).

4. Divide the class into small groups of two to three students. Ask students to review their individual charts. Each student will choose one statement about which he or she felt strongly and discuss the reasons for that opinion with other group members. Then the group should brainstorm a short list of people who may have reasons for forming the opposite opinion. For example, students are likely to feel strongly that a $2.61 hourly wage for Mexican workers is bad news because that amount is very low compared to what most U.S. workers earn. However, the information could be good news for a U.S. manufacturer who is looking for a less expensive way to make products. Check in with the small groups frequently as they work; students may need help to place isolated facts into a more complete picture.

Debriefing

1. Ask a student spokesperson from each group to give some examples of the perspectives they considered and to summarize any difficulty the group had in imagining different points of view.

2. Ask students to discuss how they felt when their opinions were challenged by other students. Did any students change their opinions during the activity?

3. Revisit statement #7. Ask students if their reactions to this statement would change if it were phrased in a different, but equally true, way? For example, the statement would be equally true as "Almost 80 percent of the cars purchased in this country are made in the United States." Point out that even "facts" can be stated in ways that emphasize a particular perspective.

4. Help students identify ways statements of fact can be checked for accuracy and bias. For example, the fact should be supported by multiple sources. We can develop the habit of looking "behind the curtain." In other words, who is issuing the statement? Does that person or organization have a biased perspective?

Extending the Ideas

- Ask students to gather a list of facts from almanacs or other brief information sources about a Peace Corps host country and indicate whether those facts represent good news or bad news. This is a good opportunity to instruct students about the uses and limitations of various sources of information. For example, in most almanacs, infant mortality rates for a given country are reported for one year only. What at first glance appears to be a dire fact may actually be good news when statistics are compared over time.

- If the class is participating in the World Wise Schools match program, students can locate facts about their Peace Corps Volunteer's host country and ask the Volunteer to respond in good news/bad news fashion.

Good News/Bad News/Who Cares

Fact	Good News	Bad News	Who Cares?	Why?
1. Americans spend more than $20 million a day on snacks.*				
2. In 1993, Middle Eastern nations produced 18,446 barrels of crude oil a day. Those countries used 3,489 barrels a day.				
3. Chinese is the native language of more than one billion people. English is the native language of 300-450 million people.				
4. Each person in the United States eats more than four pounds of cucumbers a year.*				
5. The number of Internet users reached 25 million in 1995.				
6. The average hourly wage for workers in Mexico was $2.61 in 1994.				
7. In 1993, 15.6 percent of the automobiles sold in the United States were made in Japan.				
8. The New York Yankees won the World Series in 1996.				
9. About six billion people inhabit the Earth. By 2050 the world population will increase to about 10 billion.				
10. School attendance is not required in Guatemala.				

*Source: *The Great Food Almanac: A Feast of Fact From A-Z* by Irena Chalmers (San Francisco: Collins, 1994). Other information is from *The Universal Almanac 1996,* John W. Wright, editor (Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel, 1995).

Activity Suggestions: Grades 10-12

Beauty

Class time needed: Two to three class periods

Materials

- Objects provided by students
- Art supplies

Objectives

- Students will develop appreciation for the individual experiences that shape our views of what is important or valuable.
- Students will practice tolerance and acceptance.

Note: **This activity asks students to share potentially sensitive aspects of their personal lives. Help shy or reluctant students find "safe" ways to participate and set clear expectations for mutual respect in the class.**

Introduction

Objects tell stories. Each of us owns treasured mementos that hold little meaning or appeal for other people. These objects help us remember significant events and serve as symbols of personal or family milestones. This activity will help students understand how individual experience influences the way we view the world. It also provides a forum for discussion of the value of diversity and of our capacity to change.

Procedure

1. Ask each student to consider the emotional connotations of the word beautiful. An object that has personal or sentimental value may be "beautiful" to its owner, even though someone else might consider it odd, unusual, or ugly.

2. Ask each student to bring an object to class that he or she considers "beautiful" because of its connection to an idea, event, or person important to its owner.

3. Have students display their objects in the classroom as if it were a museum.

4. Have students tour the exhibit and take notes describing their gut reactions or first impressions of each object. Try to maintain a formal museum or gallery atmosphere in the class. Owners should not explain their objects, and observers should not comment aloud.

5. For the second class period, ask each student to find a way to explain the significance of his or her object. Students could use visual art, poetry, storytelling, dance, etc. to illustrate the events and feelings associated with their objects. They should invite their classmates to ask questions about each object and the story behind it. Students should then visit the "museum" a second time, again noting their responses.

Debriefing

Use the following questions (or questions you create) to guide discussion of how perceptions can change when we have the opportunity to hear each other's stories.

1. How did it feel to know that people were looking closely at, and perhaps making judgments about, something you treasure?

2. What happened the first time you looked at the objects exhibited by your classmates? Share some of the observations you made about the objects. What happened when you viewed the objects for a second time? Share some of your new observations. Did your feelings about the object change?

3. What are some things you learned about each other during this exercise? What did you learn about yourselves?

4. Working in groups of two to three, brainstorm a list of things that people judge according to appearance. Is it ever OK to do this? When?

5. What if we did this activity with people who were not familiar with American culture? How would you help them to understand the value of your objects? What questions could you ask to learn about the things they consider "beautiful"?

6. What are some things we can do to stay open-minded about things we don't immediately like or understand? As a group, devise a checklist or guide that students can use to help them remember to re-examine first impressions.

Extending the Ideas

- Ask students to keep a journal of their reactions to new situations, people, food, music, etc. for a specific time. Invite students to share their journal entries with the class and to discuss their progress as they develop perspective awareness.

- If your class is corresponding with a Peace Corps Volunteer, ask him or her to compare initial impressions of the host country with later feelings. Ask your Volunteer to discuss perspective awareness. What strategies does the Volunteer use to understand issues and events from the perspective of the hosts?

- Invite a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer or someone from your community who has spent time in other countries to talk to your class about perceptions of unfamiliar things from another culture. Ask the speaker to describe how these impressions influenced his or her behavior. Ask if the unfamiliar became routine over time and how that happened. Have the speaker describe situations that illustrate the concepts brought out in this lesson. Contact World Wise Schools for a list of Returned Volunteers in your area (e-mail: <dpinfo@peacecorps.gov>; phone: 800-424-8580, extension 2283).

Perspectives on Paraguay

Class time needed: 40 minutes

Materials

A copy of "Perspectives on Paraguay," an interview with returned Peace Corps Volunteer Nichola Minott, for each student

Objective

- Students will develop awareness of diverse cultural norms and values.

Introduction

Nichola Minott was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Paraguay from 1991 to 1994. She worked as a teacher trainer and then as a health coordinator. She was interviewed during the filming of a World Wise Schools video, *Destination: Paraguay.* In the interview excerpts printed on the student activity sheet, Nichola tells about her experiences as a Volunteer in a South American country. She provides a glimpse of the lives and culture of the people of Paraguay. Be aware that students may find aspects of Paraguayan life unfamiliar and strange in comparison to their own. Emphasize the need to be respectful of other peoples' ways of life, ideas, and traditions while reading and discussing the interview. The full interview can be found on the Peace Corps web site at <http://www.peacecorps.gov/www/dp/interview/wwsin1.html>.

Procedure

1. Help students locate Paraguay on a world map. Ask students to share their ideas about how a Paraguayan teenager's life might compare to a teenager's life in the United States. At this point it doesn't matter whether students have much background information about Paraguay; it will be interesting to see what the students' expectations are.

2. Provide each student with a copy of "Interview with Nichola Minott." Ask students to read the interview to learn about aspects of Paraguayan life and to compare it to their own.

3. After the students have read the interview independently, ask them to work in small groups to find specific similarities and differences between Paraguayan and American views. Be sure all of the cultural backgrounds represented in your class are heard during these discussions and during the debriefing period.

4. Ask a student spokesperson to summarize the similarities and differences identified by each small group.

Debriefing

Use the following questions to help students think about what they have learned.

1. What Paraguayan customs or views seemed most unusual to you? Are there aspects of Paraguayan life described in the interview that would be difficult for you to adapt to? Did Nichola Minott describe family and social expectations that also are important in your community?

2. What are some characteristics of life in our community that might make a teenager from Paraguay feel uncomfortable?

3. What are some values and characteristics that Nichola Minott labels as "American"? Would all Americans in all regions and communities agree with her?

4. Nichola Minott said that the Paraguayan perception of Americans is "blond hair, blue eyes." If you were a Peace Corps Volunteer in Paraguay, what could you do to give people a more diverse perspective?

Extending the Ideas

- View the World Wise Schools video *Destination: Paraguay.* Ask students if their impressions of life in Paraguay formed after reading Nichola Minott's interview were confirmed or challenged.

- Have students create a video tape that demonstrates daily life in your community. Encourage students to present the community's diversity.

- Use this same reading as the basis for a discussion on generalizations and how to recognize them. See "How Accurate Is It?" in the Grades 6-9 section of this guide for suggestions and debriefing questions.

Perspectives on Paraguay

Question (Q): Describe the people in Paraguay.

Answer (A): OK. They're very open, they're very friendly. No matter how poor they are, they'll invite you to the house and give you the best portion of what they have. They're also very honest. For example, in the United States people are so conscious about their weight. In Paraguay, if someone is overweight, they'll say, "Oh, you know you're fat," but it's not something that's considered negative. It's just how you are. They're very honest about that, and I think that it takes a little bit of adjusting, especially coming from a culture where physical appearance is so important. It takes a little adjusting to realize that they're just being honest, but at the same time, it's not necessarily seen in a negative way.

The people of Paraguay are very friendly. They're shy at first. They feel you out to see who you are, especially if you're a foreigner. But once they get to know you, they are very protective of you. They make sure that nothing happens to you. They're just really open, really loving.

I think they value the family; the family's very close. Daughters, even though they get married, they still come back and they visit their mothers, their fathers. They live fairly close to each other. On weekends and Sundays, they always come back if they don't live very close to visit and have lunch. They're just a very open and loving people.

Q: How is life in Paraguay different from life in the U.S.?

A: Well, there's a term that they use here a lot in Paraguay—it's called *tranquillo*. I think life is a lot calmer, more low key, down to earth in Paraguay than in the U.S. In the U.S. everybody's rushing to get somewhere, rushing to do something. There's never enough time to do the things they want to do, and I think in Paraguay there is. There isn't so much emphasis on job as there is on family, and I think that's something that really differentiates the people in Paraguay.

Q: Describe the differences between men and women in the rural areas and then, if it's different, in the urban areas.

A: Well, there's a great division of the sexes. The men are considered the heads of the families and the women are to stay home and have babies and take care of the kids. That is the way it is. It's to a greater degree in the more rural areas, of course, and there's more freedom for women in the more urban areas. Like, for example, in this town, Carapegua, the women have jobs, they're teachers. They have their own businesses. In the rural areas that's not the case at all. So there are very distinct lines between males and females. And, for example, for a woman to reach a certain age and not be married is not considered socially acceptable. There are women who have remained single most of their lives, but it is not socially acceptable. Also, it is unheard of for a woman to live alone. They're always living with their families. For me to come into this community, which is a fairly large town, and live by myself was something that they just could not understand. The women have been trained . . . to find a husband and get married and have a family. And that's the way it is right now. Just recently they have started to change that mentality, but it's a very long process, and it's not going to change overnight.

Q: Describe some of the dating customs.

A: Women are not allowed to [go to] dances until they're 15. When they turn 15, there's a huge party and then they're considered eligible. They can get married at 15, and they can go out to parties with a chaperone, either their mother or their older sisters. They cannot go to parties, especially in the more rural areas, without a chaperone or a date. They have certain visiting days when the men go over to the women's houses. They sit with the family and they talk to the dad, and they have very little time alone, and they get to know the family. On the non-visiting days they can do what they want. But when a man comes on those certain days, then that means he's interested and they're dating.

Q: Talk a little bit about some of the friendships you've made here in this area.

A: Well, let's see, I've made really good friends here. I think that's a feat in itself in that [I had] to learn the language. I wouldn't consider the friends I've made here superficial friends. I think it took a lot of work and a lot of trying on both our parts, but I think I've made friends that I hope to maintain when I return to the States. And the thing that is so important to me is that I've made them in a different language. We did not speak the same language when I first came here, and now we've passed that and it's a deeper friendship, and I value it. I value it more because of the work to form the friendships here.

Q: Do you feel that you've become part of the community?

A: Yeah! I felt I became part of the community . . . but you're always a foreigner, you're always the North American. I felt that people accepted me, and they were comfortable around me, but I don't think that I could, at least in two years, ever be completely integrated into the community. I'm still considered a novelty in a lot of ways. Their perception of Americans is blond hair, blue eyes—because that's the majority of what they see on TV and of Volunteers coming down here. I think I was a novelty because they'd never seen a black woman. So it was an awakening for them, and I think a good thing that they got to see an American who was not representative of the white Americans that they see on television.

Q: Do you have any special experiences or moments that you can share with us that come to mind, stand out?

A: I think one of the most rewarding experiences for me, workwise, was visiting a school and seeing them using something that we'd talked about in a workshop. That was really rewarding. For example, seeing a little kid wearing shoes and talking to his little brother or sister and saying, "You've got to put on your shoes," after I talked about not running around without shoes so you don't get parasites—I think that was rewarding. On another level, working with the kids, even though I didn't work with them a lot, was something I had a good feeling about.

On a personal level, I'd say the moment I got past the superficial barrier with my friends was very special to me, the moment we got to the point in our friendship where they started to come to me and ask my advice about things and talk to me. Then I knew we had reached a new level where I could talk to them and get advice from them—just like in the States when you're hanging out with your girlfriends and you're gossiping and going over your problems and getting different opinions. I thought that was one of the more rewarding experiences—when they started to come to me and when I started to do that with them.

Q: So what do you think people in the U.S. can learn from the Paraguayans?

A: I think one of the things we're losing in the U.S. is the importance of family. I've learned that personally being here. Just to value the family, also the importance of the community as a whole and working together for the community. It is not always the case in all communities, but in comparison to the United States, there's still a strong sense of community here in Paraguay. I think in the United States people tend to focus on consuming and having things, and I don't know whether it's to replace something they're lacking emotionally, but I think here people are more concerned with living. They buy things they need, but there is not so much emphasis on work and earning money. There's more emphasis on family. Work is to get the things you need in the house and the things you need to survive. But family is important.

Q: What makes Paraguay special for you?

A: There are a lot of things that make Paraguay special for me. I can't pinpoint one thing. I will say my experience has been enriched by the people I've met. . . . I really enjoy the culture, the language, listening to Guarinese even though I don't understand it. Spanish, learning Spanish, and just learning about a different culture, and communicating when three years ago I couldn't. I think that's part of the reason I really enjoy it, that I now have an understanding of people that I didn't have before.

Nichola Minott served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Paraguay from 1991 to 1994.

Endnotes

[21] Monica Fitzgerald served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guatemala from 1987 to 1989. This comment is taken from an interview in March 1997.

[22] Jean Deal served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Marshall Islands from 1993 to 1995. This comment is taken from an interview in March 1997.

[23] Drum, Jan, Steve Hughes and George Otero, *Global Winners: 74 Learning Activities for Inside and Outside the Classroom* (Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, 1994), p. xiv.

[24] Adapted from *Peace Corps Times*, Number 1, 1994, pp. 34-35.

[25] Previously unpublished adaptation of a traditional folktale. Printed with permission.

[26] Adapted with permission from *The Prejudice Book* by David Shiman (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1979).

PART III:

CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS AND PROMOTING CULTURAL AWARENESS

I guess there are two alternatives . . . you can go the path of division and separation and fear and distrust . . . or you can go the other route that can bring you peace and friendship.

-Kevin Webb[27]

We as individuals can just make a little effort every day to try and understand one person that we come across.

-Texas 12th Grader

Challenging assumptions involves many skills: discriminating between facts and opinions, differentiating between faulty and accurate generalizations, and being able to recognize stereotypes in one's own and others' speech. Challenging assumptions also involves such skills as recognizing the uniqueness and worth of people, feeling empathy, and countering the prejudicial statements of others. Perhaps the most important skills are recognizing the limitations of stereotypical thinking and cultivating a willingness to change direction when we start toward the "path of division and separation."

These are skills that Peace Corps Volunteers must apply every day in their host countries. And these skills can be modeled, practiced, reinforced, and therefore taught, in our schools. Bill Piatt, who served as a Peace Corps country director in Togo in West Africa and in the Czech Republic in Europe, suggests that students will invest the effort to understand one another if educators "create situations in which the students must work together."

The activities in this section are designed to help students work together to explore their assumptions—and to then continue working together to find safe and effective ways to reduce divisive thought and language.

Several of the activities contained in this section encourage students to speak out when they hear stereotypes being used to describe individuals or groups. To do this takes courage and tact, but the results, as illustrated in the following article, can be very effective. Consider sharing this story with your students or your colleagues as an example of the gentle art of teaching tolerance.

What is Black? [28]

It started off like any other day in my job as a language arts resource teacher. Upon arrival at my school, I greeted teachers and began working on my current project. Shortly after the bell, Miss Samuel, another teacher, came over and asked me if I'd come to her class to teach a lesson on color poems.

"No problem," I told her. I smiled to myself because this was one of my favorite lessons. The kids love it, and it really seems to bring out their creativity.

Later that day, I marched confidently into her class bearing my "tools of the trade": my colorfully lettered chart, my extra pencils, my chalk, my paper, and my already prepared examples of color poems. The lesson began by soliciting color images from the students.

"What things can you think of that are green?" I asked enthusiastically.

"A bluggoe leaf . . . an unripe mango . . . grass . . . skin-ups . . . trees . . . a lunch kit . . . a hair clip . . . an exercise. . . ." they responded. I eagerly recorded each and every one of their responses on my chart.

I then shared some examples of color poems (which came from a handout I received from the Ministry). Here are a few examples.

What is Red?
Red is a heart filled with love.
Red is a face when it's angry and mean.
Red is when the door is slammed.
Red is Moses and the burning tree.
Red is a volcano erupting.

What is Black?
Black is the color of hatred.
Black is a gloomy night, ashes,
Tar on the road, a car's tyre.
Black is the funeral, dragging slow,
A midnight sound, dark and low.

What is Pink?
Pink is the sky at sunset.
Pink is a kitten's tiny nose.
Pink is the inside of a rabbit's ear.
Pink is how I feel inside on my birthday.
Pink is the joy of being alive.

I then encouraged the children to write a descriptive color poem as a class, with all students offering ideas and suggestions. Hands went up like rockets and children bobbed up and down in their seats, begging to be called on. We composed quite a nice color poem, "What is Blue?" Finally, I put the students into small groups to write their own color poems. They worked well together, cooperating and sharing.

When the lesson was over, I quickly conferred with Miss Samuel to see how she felt about the lesson. We both agreed that the students had made a good effort and have some excellent poems to prove it. I left the class feeling satisfied and went about my duties, without thinking again of the lesson.

The next morning, Miss Samuel came over to have a "piece-a-chat" with me. She told me that something about the lesson I taught had bothered her, but she couldn't put her finger on it at the time. Throughout the evening she thought about it and finally realized it was my example color poem, "What is Black?" She found that my poem used negative images to describe black and decided to try her hand at presenting black in a poem with positive images. This is what she came up with.

What is Black?
Black is the shine of ebony
And the color of some people's hair.
Black is the feather of the Corbeau King
And the skin of my ancestors.
Black is the seed of the sweet Sapodilla.
Black is the forerunner of the fair dawn.

Black is Truth.
Black is Justice.
Black is Beautiful.
Black is the writing of Martin Luther King
And the words of Malcolm X.
Black is the philosophy of Marcus Garvey
And the teaching of Bustamante.
Black is the roll of the Tumba drums
And the dancing of the Shango women.
Black is the taste of molasses sweet
And the culture of my people.
Black is the son of King Shaka
And the daughter of Queen Nazinga.
Black is the ring of the Short-Knees' gullo.
Black is Free.
Black is We.
Black is being Me.

As I finished reading her poem, every hair on my body stood on end and tears welled in my eyes. I stammered out some words of praise for her powerful poem and she went on to see about her class.

Unknowingly, Miss Samuel had opened my eyes to my own hidden prejudice. This was upsetting to me because I consider myself extremely open to and accepting of other races and cultures. I've lived and taught in a rural village in Kenya and now in the West Indies. I appreciate, even celebrate, the richness and beauty in other cultures. I am an avid listener of African music like Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Miriam Makeba, and Hugh Masekela. I enjoy reading the works of African writers like Bessie Head, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Chinua Achebe. I choose to see movies like *Cry Freedom* and *A Dry White Season.* I have participated in anti-Apartheid rallies and believe in the ideas of Stephen Biko and Nelson Mandela. Currently, I'm involved in the most significant relationship of my life, a cross-cultural one with a Grenadian. To me, all these things show my belief in the unity of all people, regardless of race or color, and my profound respect for African culture. I consider myself free of racial prejudice. And yet, I found myself in a black culture, clearly and unconsciously contributing to negative images associated with black that have been around for many years. I'm ashamed to admit this and disappointed in myself for this lack of cultural sensitivity.

It started me thinking: Why is it that bad guys always wear black and good guys wear white? Why do we wear black for grieving our dead and white to celebrate the joy of the union of marriage? Why is black associated with death, evil, and hatred while white is associated with angels, purity, and goodness? What kind of message is this sending?

What I know is, I taught the same lesson to nearly every class in my school. Each time, I was unconsciously perpetuating the "negative images" of black and showing my own "true colors" (excuse the pun). If it wasn't for Miss Samuel, I would have continued my subtle prejudice without even realizing it. So, I owe a lot to her for reminding me, gently, that although we consciously believe in racial equality and unity, sometimes our actions don't show it.

For now, my former example of the color poem "What is Black?" lies at the bottom of my trash bin. I'll be using her powerful images of black from now on. Thank you, Miss Samuel.

Lindy Nelson served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Grenada in the West Indies from 1991 to 1993

Activity Suggestions: Grades 3-5

Stereotype Busters

Class Time Needed: 20 minutes

Materials

- A cassette tape or CD player and recorded music
- 4 small containers
- Pieces of paper, each printed with a stereotype (Examples: All redheads have short tempers, all nurses are women, all tall people like basketball, only men like sports cars, all doctors are rich)

Note: Be careful not to use racial or other stereotypes that might offend participants.

Objective

- Students will learn appropriate ways to address stereotyping.

Introduction

Each of us hears or makes stereotypical comments every day. Students need to become aware of the damaging effects of generalizations and stereotypes. They also need to develop tools for addressing stereotypes when they hear them and checking their own thinking when they find themselves using stereotypes to make judgments. This activity gives students an opportunity to practice ways to reduce stereotyping.

Procedure

1. Have the students arrange their chairs in a large circle.

2. Review the concepts of stereotypes and prejudice and come to an agreement about definitions. In this context, a stereotype is an oversimplified statement based on a single characteristic. For example, the statement "All men hate to cook" expresses a stereotype. Prejudice is to *pre*-judge or to form an opinion (usually negative) about someone or something before all the facts are known. "Richard can't cook—he's a guy!" is an example of prejudice.

3. Discuss why stereotypes and prejudice are harmful. For example, they are often based on faulty information, they get in the way of knowing people as individuals, and they can lead to serious misunderstandings.

4. Tell students that even though it is easy to fall into the habit of using stereotypes to prejudge people, there are ways to reduce stereotypes and combat prejudice. One way is to check our own thinking, to be careful of jumping to conclusions based on generalizations or others' opinions. Another way is to politely challenge stereotypes when we hear them by offering evidence that the stereotype is false.

5. Model some statements that "bust" the men-hate-to-cook-stereotype, for example:
    - I don't like to stereotype, so I can't agree with you. My brother makes the best bread I've ever tasted.
    - I don't like to stereotype, so I can't agree with you. I'm sure there are many men who like to cook.

6. Explain that the students will participate in a game that will help them become "Stereotype Busters." Participants will pass a container around the circle when the music begins. When the music stops, the student who is holding the container will read the stereotype it holds. Then, the student to his or her right will respond, using statements similar to those modeled earlier. Encourage other students in the circle to offer additional suggestions.

7. Repeat the activity with the remaining containers.

Debriefing

Use the following questions to help students think about how and when to challenge stereotypes in real life situations. *Note:* **During the debriefing, be sure to discuss when it is and is not appropriate to challenge statements made by other people.**

1. How did it feel to speak up about stereotypes?

2. What happened when it was your turn to respond? Was it easy or difficult to "bust" the stereotype?

3. What are some other stereotypes? How do you think these are learned? What are some ways to respond to stereotypes?

4. It has been said that a stereotypical statement tells more about the person who says it than about the people who are being stereotyped. What does this mean? Do you agree or disagree?

5. Do you think you could really use "Stereotype Busters" to check your own thinking? Would you feel comfortable doing this with a family member? A friend?

6. What if you heard an older person make a stereotypical statement? (Caution students that it is best to know people before challenging their statements. We can't predict a stranger's response. The best response is to do a mental check to make sure we are not influenced by someone else's prejudices.)

7. What advice would you give to a friend who is the object of stereotyping and prejudice?

Extending the Ideas

- If stereotypes (oversimplified images of people, issues, or events) lead to prejudice (judgments based on stereotypical images), then prejudice leads to discrimination—treating someone unfairly because we believe their differences make them inferior. Discuss this continuum with your students, using news stories or fictional stories that deal with discrimination issues as examples. Have students look for stories related to discrimination in magazines and newspapers and on television broadcasts over a period of several days. Have students identify the stereotypes that lie behind these stories. What assumptions (prejudgments) were made about the people who experienced discrimination?

- If your class is corresponding with a Peace Corps Volunteer through World Wise Schools, ask the Volunteer questions like these.
  - –Did you have any preconceived ideas about your host country before going there? How were these prejudgements changed during your volunteer service?
  - –Do the people in your host country have preconceived ideas about Americans? How do you correct these ideas?
  - –Are there other stereotypes in your host country similar to the ones in the United States?

- People often develop oversimplified ideas about the homeless. A study of the causes of homelessness and the services available for the homeless in your community might lead your class to a service-learning project. After studying the problem, and learning about the issues, students could develop a plan to help meet community needs. Use the Service-Learning Rubric in the introduction to this guide to help plan a project with strong impact.

People Tags[29]

Class Time Needed: 30 minutes

Materials

One copy of "People Tags" for every four students

Objectives

- Students will understand how labels, even those that seem neutral, can influence our thinking about people.
- Students will recognize the importance of getting to know a person before making judgments.

Introduction

Labels are a convenient, and necessary, way of organizing information about people and events. But labels often become substitutes for thought and experience. Even when labels are accurate and neutral, they describe only one aspect of a person. When they are used as the sole source of information, they limit our understanding and cut us off from full communication. "People Tags" is an activity that illustrates how misleading labels can be when they are applied to people.

Procedure

1. Prepare for the lesson by making one copy of "People Tags" for every four students. Cut off the fact cards and keep them for the second part of the activity.

2. Divide students into groups of four. Give each group a set of people cards (Uncle Fred, Aunt Jennifer, etc.) and object cards (dictionary, clock, etc.). Do not give out the fact cards yet.

3. Assign the task: You are doing your holiday shopping for Uncle Fred, who rides in a motorcycle gang; Aunt Jennifer, a librarian; Cousin George, a Navy recruit; and Great-Aunt Phyllis, a senior citizen. From the collection in front of you, which gifts would you choose for each?

4. After a few minutes, discuss the following.
    - Who gave Uncle Fred the leather jacket? Aunt Jennifer the coffee mug? Cousin George the tattoo? Great-Aunt Phyllis the rocking chair?
    - How did you decide who would get each gift?
    - How did the labels (i.e., "senior citizen," "librarian") influence your decisions?

5. Pass out the fact cards and comment that perhaps the students need more information before making their final gift choices.

6. Give students time to "reassign" gifts.

Debriefing

Use the following questions to guide discussion about getting to know people before making judgments.

1. How did it feel to try to choose gifts for people based on a single piece of information or label?

2. What happened when you were given more information? Who changed their gift ideas? Why?

3. What is the purpose of this activity? Can you give some examples of ways labels influence the way you think about people or things?

4. What are some problems that can occur when we rely too much on labels?

5. What if you were asked to choose gifts for a member of this class whom you don't know well? What could you do that would help you choose the right gift?

6. How can we apply this activity to learning about other cultures?

Extending the Ideas

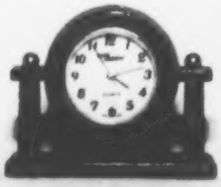
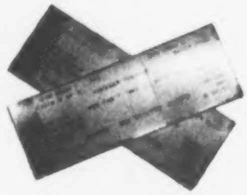
- Have students create posters to illustrate the many dimensions behind the labels with which they are most familiar—their names. Ask each student to create a list of words and phrases to correspond with letters in his or her name. Explain that the words should describe what people will learn about them when they look behind their "label" and get to know them well. Students should feel free to brag a little, as well as to describe things they may like to improve. Their names should be the center points in the designs. The teacher can use the example below or demonstrate the activity using his or her own name to get students started.

li**K**es baseball
Artistic
Reliable
Energetic
forg**E**tful
hates **M**ondays

- Have students work with a partner to find out more about each other. Give them time to talk about their interests, families, hobbies, and aspirations. Urge them to look for more than the obvious details. Then have each student create a poster about his or her partner. The posters should depict the person's personality and other attributes. The posters should be used to introduce the "real" person to the rest of the class in a validation activity. Afterwards, these should be displayed around the classroom or school.

- If you are corresponding with a Peace Corps Volunteer through World Wise Schools, send him or her smaller versions of the posters mentioned above. Be sure to use lightweight paper. If the Volunteer is a teacher or working with youth, ask him or her to consider completing this same activity and sending mini posters to your class in return.

People Tags

Uncle Fred (member of a motorcycle gang)	Aunt Jennifer (librarian)	Cousin George (Navy recruit)	Great Aunt Phyllis (senior citizen)
			
DICTIONARY			 Theater Tickets

FACT Aunt Jennifer likes modern fashions. The leather look is "in."	FACT Uncle George is looking forward to a career in the theater after his Navy tour.	FACT Uncle Fred loves antique furniture.	FACT Great-Aunt Phyllis has always been rebellious and daring.

Reducing Prejudice[30]

Class Time Needed: 40 minutes

Materials

"Reducing Prejudice" worksheets for each student

Objectives

- Students will be able to define prejudice.
- Students will identify alternatives to prejudiced behavior.

Introduction

Gordon Allport defines prejudice as "an attitude in a closed mind." In a closed mind, an attitude is cut off from new information. At its least dangerous level, prejudice is a filter that keeps one person from seeing beyond a stereotypical image. When a prejudiced person takes an action that prevents another person or a group from exercising Constitutional or human rights, then discrimination is at work. "Reducing Prejudice" is designed to call attention to intolerant behaviors that are the starting point of discrimination and to help students practice alternatives to prejudice.

Procedure

1. Distribute copies of the worksheet, "Reducing Prejudice," and have students take turns reading or acting out the "What Happened" scenarios on the worksheet. Then, lead a discussion about ways in which we are different from one another.

2. Ask students to consider whether these differences are reasons to fear or dislike one another.

3. For each scenario on the worksheet, have students explain their answers to the following questions.
    - How have the students in this situation behaved?
    - Have you ever seen behavior like this?
    - How are the students in this situation dealing with differences? Is this behavior unusual? Is it acceptable?
    - How do you think the students who have been picked on feel?
    - Have you ever had negative thoughts or reactions to people who are different from you? Why did it happen?

4. Explain that prejudice means judging someone before you really know that person. People are prejudiced when they judge other people solely on traits such as skin color, gender, religion, or social group.

5. Continue the discussion by asking the following.
    - Why is each scenario an example of prejudice?
    - Have you ever experienced prejudice? Explain.

6. Discuss ways in which people can be hurt by prejudice.

7. Divide the class into cooperative groups and direct the students' attention to the worksheet scenarios again. Ask each group to devise and role-play different endings for each situation that shows tolerance for differences and reduces prejudice. Point out that some situations present positive alternatives that the students can handle themselves. Other situations may require the help of an adult.

Debriefing

Use the following questions to help students find positive alternatives to intolerance.

1. How does it feel when someone makes fun of you or leaves you out of an activity because you are different?

2. What happened in the scenarios that demonstrated intolerance and prejudice? (Possible answers: Feelings were hurt, people were left out of activities, there was violence.)

3. What happened when you worked with your group to come up with better endings? How easy was it to think of different ways to handle these situations? What does this tell you?

4. What did you learn from this activity?

5. Have you ever experienced or witnessed situations similar to these? How did you react? Why do you think people are prejudiced?

6. What if we were all alike? Would the world be better? Would discrimination end?

7. What are some things you can do to reduce prejudice and discrimination? How comfortable would you feel doing the things you suggested in your "better ending" scenarios?

Extending the Ideas

- Have students write additional scenarios based on their own experiences with prejudice and stereotyping. Have them role-play positive alternatives to these situations.

- Carol Rogers[31] offers this advice to students who want to take positive action against prejudice and stereotyping: *"Don't be afraid to ask someone about their differences. Then, really listen."* Kevin Webb, who served in Panama from 1993 to 1995, makes a similar suggestion: *"When I was a Peace Corps Volunteer, I would ask [about differences] in a respectful way. Not just anyone, but someone I was developing a relationship with. I would just say, 'I don't understand why you do this or why you say this . . . maybe you could help me to understand.'"*

- Help students identify some positive steps they can take as individuals to get to know people who are different from themselves. Here are some ideas.
  - –Make an effort to get to know someone of a different culture, race, age, or religion.
  - –Spend time with an elderly person or a person with a disability.
  - –Invite someone new to join your friends in an activity.
  - –Ask someone from a different cultural or religious group if you can participate in a special event, such as Kwaanza, Chinese New Year, or Passover.

- Consider extending the learning into a service project. Work with your students to conduct a needs assessment to find out how students can help in the school or community by direct service, e.g., tutoring or volunteering at a home for the elderly; indirect service, e.g., collections, fund-raisers or clean-ups; or advocacy, e.g, lobbying or public performances. See the Service-Learning Rubric in the introduction to this book to help devise a project that includes curriculum, service, and reflection.

"Reducing Prejudice" Worksheet

Directions: *Read or act out each of the "What Happened" scenarios below. Discuss the situations with your teacher. Then work in cooperative groups to find a better ending for each situation.*

What Happened

1. A new student arrives at school wearing the dress of her native country. The other children make fun of her and call her a weirdo. No one wants to sit next to her.

A Better Ending

1. A new student arrives at school wearing the dress of her native country . . .

What Happened

2. A student's father has told him that all people of a certain race are bad. The student gets a friend to join him in picking on children of that race. One day, a terrible fight breaks out in the school yard and several students are hurt.

A Better Ending

2. A student's father has told him that all people of a certain race are bad . . .

What Happened

3. Several boys sign up for an intramural field hockey team. The girls refuse to play with them.

A Better Ending

3. Several boys sign up for an intramural field hockey team . . .

What Happened

4. Several students attend a special class for gifted students. In the school cafeteria, other students call them nerds and make fun of them.

A Better Ending

4. Several students attend a special class for gifted students . . .

What Happened

5. In the locker room, a male student is upset and crying. A group of five other boys tease him and call him a sissy. They exclude him from their plans for a camp-out.

A Better Ending

5. In the locker room, a male student is upset and crying . . .

Fighting Words With Words[32]

Class Time Needed: 30 minutes

Materials

- Examples of sweeping generalizations and balancing statements written on individual strips of paper
- Small weights (such as spools or small blocks of wood) to attach to each paper strip
- A two-sided scale
- Copies of "Fighting Words With Words"

Objectives

- Students will recognize the faulty thinking behind stereotypes and sweeping generalizations.
- Students will practice using balancing statements to counteract stereotypes and sweeping generalizations.

Introduction

"Fighting Words with Words" provides students with some simple tools to use when confronted with the prejudicial statements of others.

Procedure

1. Prepare for the activity by writing examples of sweeping generalizations and balancing statements (see examples below) on individual strips of paper. Tape each strip to a small weight. You will use the two-sided scale to show students how balancing statements can "balance" sweeping generalizations.

Generalization

Elderly people are afraid to try new things.

Balancing Statement

My grandmother just bought a computer. She loves using e-mail!

Generalization

People with physical disabilities can't play sports.

Balancing Statement

Former New York Yankee pitcher Jim Abbott was born with only one hand.

2. Review the meaning of "stereotype" and "sweeping generalization" with your students.

stereotype: *a preconceived belief that is applied to all members of a specific group. For example, a statement such as "Let's get Kyle to play on the basketball team. He's the tallest kid in the class" expresses a stereotype. The speaker assumes that all tall people like to play basketball.*

sweeping generalization: *a statement like "All tall people like to play basketball." This suggests all members of a group are alike.*

3. Place a sweeping generalization on one side of the scale. Point out that sweeping generalizations give a one-sided or unbalanced view of a person or group. Then balance the scale by placing a counter or "balancing" statement on the other side. Ask students to describe the purpose of a balancing statement.

4. Place additional examples of sweeping generalizations and balancing statements on the scale. Point out the particular strategy being used in each balancing statement you place on the scale. (Examples: "This statement gives specific rather than general information" and "This statement politely disagrees.")

5. Have students work with partners to come up with the sweeping generalizations behind the balancing statements given in "Fighting Words with Words." For example, if the balancing statement is "I just don't agree with you that girls don't do as well as boys in math. That hasn't been our class's experience at all," then the original statement could have been something like "Girls aren't good at math."

Debriefing

Use the following questions to help students find ways to use balancing statements when they hear sweeping generalizations or stereotypes.

1. How does it feel when you hear a sweeping generalization such as "All kids are lazy"?
2. What did you learn from this demonstration? What effect do sweeping generalizations and stereotypes have on people?
3. Have you ever heard a friend or a family member use a stereotype to describe an individual or a group of people? How could you use balancing statements when this happens?
4. What are some other strategies you can use to counteract "unbalanced" thinking about other people?

Extending the Ideas

- Have students make a list of sweeping generalizations and stereotypes they have heard. Ask them to work in groups to come up with counter statements to balance each statement. Share these with the entire class.
- Have students work with partners to write examples of situations that involve the use of sweeping generalizations and stereotypes. Then ask each pair to write a dialogue of a discussion that includes balancing statements. Have the groups perform their dialogues for the class and ask the class members to identify the balancing statements used in each scenario.

- Share the following description of a Peace Corps Volunteer's experience in his host country with your students. This anecdote provides a good opportunity to help your students understand that prejudice is not always a factor in situations where people from different cultures come together.

> *I would ride a bus from the capital out to a small town where I would catch another bus out to the village up in the mountains. I noticed that if I got on the bus and it wasn't very crowded, all the other seats on the bus would fill up before someone would sit beside me because I was different—I was the one white person on the bus. People naturally are going to gravitate toward what they know and what they are comfortable with. . . . I learned really quickly that they weren't [choosing other seats] because they hated white people. I was different and they were naturally going to go to where they felt comfortable first. My seat would usually be the last to fill up and I often had wonderful conversations with whomever ended up sitting next to me.*
>
> -Kevin Webb

- Have students work in cooperative groups to design posters that illustrate the nine types of balancing statements identified in the "Fighting Words with Words" worksheet. Post the whole set in a public place, such as the school cafeteria or a hallway.

Fighting Words With Words

We can do many things to act against stereotypes. One easy thing we can do is to change the way we talk about other people, particularly when we don't know them very well. In our everyday discussions with friends and classmates, we can use words and phrases that give a balanced view of others. Sentences that give another point of view are called "balancing statements."

Directions: Below are some examples of stereotypes and balancing statements. Can you identify the sweeping generalizations that are behind the stereotypes?

1. **Think about or share opposite examples when someone makes a sweeping generalization.**

    They say: *Sri Lankans have long, straight hair.*
    You say: *Two of my Sri Lankan friends have short hair that's permed.*
    Generalization:

2. **Give specific rather than general information about people.**

    My new friend from Jamaica enjoys rock music and country music, not just reggae. He is interested in playing in the orchestra, but he also wants to try out for the volleyball team.
    Generalization:

3. **Point out the good or positive things about others.**

    When I was a Volunteer, most people in Nepal went out of their way to help strangers.
    Generalization:

4. **Share cultural information.**

   George isn't eating the sausages because his family practices Islam. Did you know that people who practice Islam usually don't eat pork?

   Generalization:

5. **Actively question (even just to yourself) the reliability of the source of information.**

   I wonder if John really knows what the Honduran people are like. He was there for only a few days. Maybe he or someone he knows just had a bad experience.

   Generalization:

6. **Politely disagree.**

   Really, I just don't agree with you that girls don't do as well as boys in math. That hasn't been true in our class.

   Generalization:

7. **Point out that what may be true for some is not necessarily true for all.**

   I know a lot of people in Senegal are farmers, but they don't all live in the country, nor do they all become farmers. In fact, many work in the cities or go to the university and study for advanced degrees.

   Generalization:

8. **Wait before making a judgment.**

   Think to yourself: *That girl seems really stuck-up to me, but I'd better wait to form an opinion about her. Maybe she just doesn't speak English very well yet. Or maybe she's shy.*

   Generalization:

Activity Suggestions: Grades 10-12

Understanding Prejudice[33]

Class Time Needed: Two class periods

Materials

- A copy of "Prejudice: A Definition" for each student
- A copy of "Bogardus Social Distance Scale" for each student
- A copy of "A Continuum of Social Relationship Among Human Groups" for each student

Objective

- Students will understand the meaning of personal preference, prejudice, discrimination, and scapegoating.

Introduction

This lesson can be implemented from several different entry points, or all of the components can be used, depending on your goals and your students' understanding of the concepts of prejudice and discrimination. When you use all three components, students will have the opportunity to move from theoretical understanding to more personal examination of their own levels of tolerance.

Entry Point A

Role-play the following activities.

- Only students wearing (brand name) ___ blue jeans can attend the school assembly.
- Only students wearing digital watches may take the social studies exam. Everyone else fails.
- Only pupils wearing (brand name) ___ shoes may go to lunch. The others must stay in the classroom during the lunch period.

Discuss the feelings of the "ins" and the "outs." How did it feel to be denied a privilege because of an arbitrary rule? How did the privileged students behave toward those who were told they could not attend the assembly or go to lunch?

Entry Point B

Have students read "Prejudice: A Definition" and review "A Continuum of Social Relationship Among Human Groups." Ask students to define prejudice, discrimination, and scapegoating. Help students identify behaviors that illustrate each of the terms on the continuum.

Entry Point C

Administer the "Bogardus Social Distance Scale." Ask students to indicate on which step of the scale they would admit members of the listed ethnic and national groups. Be sure to communicate that there are no right or wrong answers. The scale is designed to help students explore their individual feelings, and their responses should be shared only on a voluntary basis. The debriefing discussion should focus on what factors influence the way we make decisions about people different from ourselves.

When students have completed the scale, ask them to look at their own papers and discuss the following:

- What do you know about these groups? What are your sources of information? How do you know what people in the groups are like?
- How did you decide where to place each group on your distance scale?
- Where do your feelings about these groups fall on the "Continuum of Social Relationship"?

Debriefing

Use the following questions to focus discussion on the importance of being aware of our own predilections and prejudices.

1. How does it feel when someone prejudges you based on your ethnic or national group? What do you learn about yourself? What do you learn about that person?

2. What happened when you used the distance scale? Were there some groups that you would exclude from any part of your life? What information did you use to make your decisions?

3. What did you learn from this activity?

4. What real life ideas are represented by the distance scale? Do you think that you have an unconscious scale that determines your level of tolerance for people who are different from you? How do you think you developed your own scale?

5. Suppose there is a group that you have placed at the sixth or seventh level on the "Bogardus Social Distance Scale." A person from that group is introduced into your tightly knit social circle by a good friend. What would you do? What happens when people don't interact with people from other groups?

6. What are some things you can do to learn more about individuals or groups that you don't know well?

Extending the Ideas

- Have students do research to learn more about the people and culture of some of the groups listed above. Discuss with the students whether having more information changes the way they rank those groups on the social distance scale.

- Using the color poems for "What is Black?" in the introduction to this section as models, ask students to write culture poems based on research on several of the groups listed above or other cultures found in your community. Provide other assignments for students whose learning style is not based on the written word. Students could make collages, slide shows, or musical or multimedia presentations.

Prejudice: A Definition

by Gordon Allport

Let's look at the stages of hostile relationships—starting with "predilection."

Predilection simply means that someone prefers one culture, one skin color, or one language as opposed to another. If you like Mexican culture and I do not, there is no use arguing about taste. We may disagree on such matters, but, as a rule, we respect one another's choice. Predilections are natural. But they are the first step toward scapegoating if they turn into more active biases, that is to say into . . .

Prejudice. A prejudice is an attitude in a closed mind. ("Don't bother me with facts, I've already made up my mind.") Some Europeans may think that all Americans are loudmouthed spendthrifts. This stereotyped view is hard to change. It is a prejudice. An Oxford student is said to have remarked, "I despise all Americans, but I've never met one I didn't like." This anecdote suggests that prejudgments may stand even when available evidence is against them. Some people with prejudices may think that blacks have rhythm, that Scotsmen are thrifty, or that a woman's place is in the home.

Prejudice, if kept to oneself, causes no great harm except to the mind that possesses it. But prejudice expressed leads to . . .

Discrimination. That means leaving somebody out because of prejudiced thinking. Generally it is based not on an individual's intrinsic qualities but on a "label" branding the individual as a member of a group to be looked down upon. It means separating a group forcibly and unjustly from our neighborhoods, our schools, our churches, our labor unions and our professions.

Scapegoating is hostile behavior by word or deed. The victim usually cannot fight back, for scapegoats are usually members of vulnerable minority groups. *[Editor's note:* "Minority" does not refer only to race or ethnicity.] The essential cowardice of scapegoating is illustrated by the persecution of the Salem "witches," a small, frail handful of people who could not fight back.

Adapted from ABC's of Scapegoating *by Gordon Allport (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1985).*

A Continuum of Social Relationships Among Human Groups

Friendly

Cooperation

Respect

Tolerance

Predilection

Prejudice

Discrimination

Scapegoating

Hostile

Bogardus Social Distance Scale

Directions: *The steps below represent a continuum—from close family relationships to complete physical and geographical separation—on which we may place people who are different from ourselves. Write a number beside each national and ethnic group listed below to indicate at what point on the continuum you would feel comfortable with members of those groups. You may keep your responses private, but you will be asked to discuss how you made your decisions.*

Steps

1. To close kinship by marriage
2. To a social group as a personal friend
3. To my street as a neighbor
4. To employment in my place of work within my occupation
5. To citizenship in my country
6. As visitors only to my country
7. Would exclude from my country

Groups

__ African American
__ Armenian
__ Canadian
__ Chinese
__ Cuban
__ Egyptian
__ English
__ Haitian
__ Hindu

__ French
__ German
__ Greek
__ Hispanic
__ Hungarian
__ Irish
__ Japanese
__ Jewish
__ Korean

__ Mexican
__ Native American
__ Polish
__ Puerto Rican
__ Scottish
__ Tanzanian
__ Turkish
__ Vietnamese
__ White American

Promoting Understanding[34]

Class Time Needed: 40 minutes

Materials

- Newsprint or butcher paper
- Markers
- Sticky notes

Objectives

- Students will understand the difference between categories and stereotypes.
- Students will identify ways to respond to the stereotypes they hear.

Introduction

In *Teaching About Cultural Awareness*, Gary Smith and George Otero point out an important difference between categorizing and stereotyping.

> *Because of the amount of information we have to assimilate, categorizing is necessary. It is a way to reduce and simplify an otherwise impossibly complex world. Stereotypes . . . go beyond the functionality of thinking in categories. They are beliefs about people in categories that lessen the chances of interaction and diminish the potential for recognizing and accepting differences.*[35]

This activity is designed to help students understand the negative consequences of stereotyping. Follow-up activities provide opportunities to work together to find ways to confront stereotypes.

Procedure

1. Post several sections of newsprint or butcher paper around the classroom. List one category at the top of each sheet of paper. Some possible categories are listed below, but feel free to adapt this list to make it relevant to your students.

Girls
Boys
Athletes
Honor Roll Students
Cheerleaders
Blacks/African Americans
Whites/European Americans
Hispanics/Latinos
Asians
Gays/Lesbians
Native Americans
Biracial/Multiracial
Disabled
Various Religious Groups
Elderly
Young

2. Present or review the terms "category" and "stereotype." Point out that categories help us organize the information we have about people, places, and things. For example, it makes sense to describe someone whose ancestors lived in North America well before 1492 as a Native American. But if we assume that person has certain characteristics because he or she belongs to that category, then we are stereotyping. Stereotypes ignore individual differences and assume that all of the people in a given category are alike.

3. Have students look at the posted categories and, using sticky notes, write down stereotypes they have heard about these groups of people. Then have students place the notes under the appropriate categories.

4. After everyone has finished, give students the opportunity to look at the stereotypes posted under each category. Then move to the debriefing session.

Debriefing

Use the following questions to guide student discussion about stereotypes.

1. Were any stereotypes posted about groups or categories that you belong to? How did it feel to see them "in print"?

2. Where do these stereotypes come from? How are they perpetuated?

3. Were positive as well as negative stereotypes posted? Why should positive stereotypes be avoided?

4. What did you learn from this activity? Is there any group that is free of stereotypes?

5. What if there were no stereotypes? Do you think people would behave differently toward one another?

6. Suppose your best friend believes that all the stereotypes about a certain group are true. How would you deal with that situation? What are some things we can do to avoid perpetuating stereotypes?

Extending the Ideas

- Make a list on a flip chart of categories that students in the room fall into, such as African American, Hispanic, Chinese American, band members, honor roll students, cheerleaders. (Be sure that each category will apply to at least two students.) As you go through the list, have the students identify each group to which he or she belongs. Point out that even though each person belongs to many groups, for the purposes of this exercise, students will focus on one group. Then divide the class into several small groups, e.g, a group of Baptists, a group of Chinese Americans. In each group, have students list stereotypes that are commonly applied to the group and facts that dispel the stereotypes. Then have each group present its list to the entire class.

- After all groups have presented their lists, ask the class to brainstorm what they could do to help reduce these stereotypes. For examples, refer to the activity "Fighting Words with Words." For practice, individuals can role-play what they would say or do if they experienced being stereotyped or hearing someone stereotype others. Emphasize the use of nonaccusatory language when confronting stereotypes.

- Work with your students to make a list of current popular movies or songs. Discuss the plots or lyrics. Ask the students to work independently to examine these for stereotypes. After a few minutes have them bring their findings to a cooperative group, discuss these, and rank the list for the number of stereotypes depicted. Compare all the groups' rankings and come up with a class consensus. Then pose the question: "Based on these findings, what further action can we take to reduce the use of stereotypes?" This could develop into a service-learning project. See the Service-Learning Rubric printed in the introduction to this guide.

Endnotes

[27] Kevin Webb served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Panama from 1993 to 1995. This comment is taken from an interview in March 1997.

[28] Reprinted from *Peace Corps Times*, Number 2, 1993, pp. 32-33.

[29] Adapted with permission from *Cultural Sight and Insight: Dealing with Diverse Viewpoints and Values* by Gary Smith (New York: Global Perspectives in Education [American Forum for Global Education], 1979), reprinted with permission, pp. 53-56.

[30] Adapted from *Promoting Harmony: A Compilation of Sample Lessons, Grades K-12* (Brooklyn: New York City Board of Education, 1992), by permission of the Board of Education of the City of New York.

[31] Carol Rogers served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand from 1984 to 1987. This comment is taken from an interview in March 1997.

[32] The balancing statements and examples in the activity have been adapted with permission from *To Live in a Multicultural World* (adapted by Angene Wilson and edited by Cay Hartley and Cary Morse; Washington, D.C.: Youth for Understanding International Exchange, 1992). The balancing statements originally appeared in "Stereotyping" in the Intercultural Communications Series of the Volunteers in Intercultural Programs training materials (Youth for Understanding International Exchange, 1989).

[33] Adapted from *Promoting Harmony: A Compilation of Sample Lessons, Grades K-12* (Brooklyn: New York City Board of Education, 1992), by permission of the Board of Education of the City of New York.

[34] Adapted with permission from *Building Cultural Bridges* by Joby Stafford Robinson and Robert P. Bowman, et al. (Bloomington, Indiana: National Educational Service, 1997).

[35] Gary Smith and George Otero, *Teaching About Cultural Awareness*, (Denver: Center for Teaching International Relations, University of Denver, 1989), p. 7.

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